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Inter-Ethnic Interaction of Immigrants in Informal Sport**

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**Sport for Integration:  
Inter-Ethnic Interaction of Immigrants in Informal Sport**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and immigrants who try to make a good life for themselves and their families.

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# **Sport for Integration: Inter-Ethnic Interaction of Immigrants in Informal Sport**

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The variation of sport contexts creates different sport experiences and outcomes for participants. Self-ruled and less-structured informal sport provides a context where intergroup contacts are similar to the ethnic relationships that typically occur in society. Thus, this dissertation explored the interaction experiences of immigrants in informal sport and what contributed to the interaction among participants with the contact theory as a heuristic guideline; it also explored how sport participation and interactions in informal sport impact immigrants' social relationships and integration in the new country. Participant observation and semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to collect data from informal volleyball players in a municipal recreation center and informal basketball players in a corporate campus. The results proposed a conceptual model that contained two pathways for immigrants' socialization. In Pathway 1, immigrants socialized in informal sport settings through adapting to the unwritten rules of the sport group and built sport acquaintance relationships with other participants. Several moderators were identified that impact the likelihood that intergroup contact would happen and affect the strength of the contact effects on relationship building. In Pathway 2, off-court social activities in multiple behavioral settings contributed to immigrants' integration because they successfully extended the acquaintance relationships to personal friendships. In the socializing opportunities in different settings, the participants exhibited various roles they play in their daily lives, which expanded their understandings of one another. The results contributed to social relationship building and sport for integration in informal sport. The implications generated critical discussions regarding the complementary effects of organized sport and informal sport.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

For almost one hundred years, sport has been used for developmental programs (Burnett, 2001). Sport for development practice uses sport in three ways as traditional sport, sport plus, and plus sport (Coatler, 2010). Traditional sport promotes the participation in the sport itself. Then, sport plus modifies sport in order to achieve developmental goals. Finally, plus sport uses sport to attract participants for other developmental purposes such as education. Recent organized sport for development programs applied more of sport plus and plus sport to achieve the developmental benefits planned for program participants (e.g., Forde, Lee, Mills, & Frisby, 2015; Lyras & Welty Peachy, 2011). In sport for integration, an application of plus sport, sport participation is used as a hook to create intergroup contact since playing sport is one possible way to bring people with different ethnic backgrounds together to engage and exchange through sport activities (Spaaij, 2012). This engagement and exchange is essential to establishing a greater sense of trust and belonging within the community, which are of great importance for the harmony of society (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1995).

Since significant benefits can be derived from sport participation, the study and practice of sport for development has emerged as policymakers and practitioners utilize sport to facilitate intergroup contact and relationships among ethnic groups. While it seems promising to create and facilitate intergroup contact in sport for development design and programs, some studies revealed that inter-ethnic differences were reinforced during the process rather than bridged (Krouwel, Boonstra, Duyvendak, & Veldboer, 2006; Spaaij, 2012). As a result, further consideration of sport for development programs for social integration is needed.

Currently, most sport for development practices are embedded in purposefully organized sport programs to achieve developmental objectives. This formal setting can be effective for sport for development programs that target a selective population as the beneficiary (e.g., Sport Festivals of the UNICEF). However, sport-for-integration programs require the involvement of diverse ethnic groups to promote intergroup contact and social integration rather than simply bringing together a cluster of immigrants. Thus, the presence of the ethnic majority and minority in the same sport setting is critical because intergroup contact and interaction are the foundation for changes in attitude (Spaaij, 2013).

Informal sport (pick-up games) is capable of providing such a sport setting that includes participants with diverse ethnic backgrounds. In addition, the contact and interaction among participants in informal sport are similar to ethnic relationships that typically occur in society. However, discussions of sport for development in informal sport settings are limited because of the lack of design and management in informal sport, which is very different from the concepts used in sport for development and its programs. The context of sport matters for social integration because a purposeful design may cause selectivity bias of participants and mitigate the integration effects (Pettigrew, 1997; Powers & Ellison, 1995).

Thus, the social dynamic and the intergroup contact in informal sport settings can provide a setting for social integration for minorities and immigrants. Further, it is important to examine if the sport for integration in informal sport renders similar contact and integration effects for immigrants in comparison to those in organized programs. Then, sport practitioners can have options regarding the provision of sport for development based on available resources. Thus, this study intends to explore intergroup contact and the effects of interaction for immigrants in informal sport. I seek to

understand what factors facilitate and inhibit intergroup contact and how social relationships among informal sport participants are developed and extended.

Intergroup contact is personal, face-to-face interactions with outgroup members in an effort to know them and reduce stereotypes and biases (Allport, 1954). According to Allport (1954), the contact with outgroup people under the required conditions is capable of creating mutual understanding and reducing prejudices, which are fundamental to social integration. Intergroup relationships have become an important social concern in countries with increased ethnic diversity in the population (Hamburger & Hewstone, 1997) as relevant political and social efforts have emerged to facilitate the process and improve the inter-ethnic relationship in order to reduce the negative impacts of intergroup conflicts and magnify the advantages of a diversified population.

Previous studies found that intergroup contact could moderate the negative effects resulting from increased ethnic diversity (Laurence, 2013; Stolle et al., 2013). Positive intergroup contact also lowers xenophobia, but this effect would fade away or be reversed if multiculturalism is emphasized in the context (Bekhuis, Ruiter, & Coenders, 2013). Further, previous research has emphasized the importance of creating and facilitating inter-ethnic contact, social connections, and social integration for minorities and immigrants (Elling, De Knop & Knoppers, 2001; Pühse et al., 2011). However, according to Berry's (1997) acculturation strategies, integration is different from assimilation. Assimilation is that immigrants do not wish to maintain their identity but seek interactions with the mainstream culture (Berry, 1997). Conversely, integration is defined as the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political activities while maintaining one's cultural identity (Valtonen, 2004). In addition, integration is an ongoing process of negotiation that involves all ethnicities and requires the will of all ethnicities to be a part of it. Thus, integration is a mutual process that involves the

majority, as well as minorities and immigrants. If the majority is not active in interacting with the minority or even prefers to stay separate, they leave integration or “assimilation” to be the sole responsibility of the minority and immigrants (Elling et al., 2001).

In conclusion, in order to improve ethnic relationships in society, it is important to identify effective social contexts that provide for natural intergroup contact and interaction. Specifically, it is important to explore the practice of sport for integration. Sport has been recognized as a tool to create social good; however, the selection of sport settings and the contact process are critical to understanding the success of the immigrants’ integration. The lack-of-authority and loose format of informal sport settings may be the ideal environment because participation is voluntary and contact is not deliberately enforced. Thus, allowing for the reflection of the natural and unintentional human interaction among ethnic groups. Through understanding intergroup contact in informal sport, knowledge can be gained on how intergroup contact is initiated, maintained and diminished, and how the social relationship development in informal sport differs from that in a formal sport setting.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to contribute to the body of sport studies in three ways. First, based on the importance of social integration in the current society, the findings of this study will advance the understanding of contact effects, interaction process, and integration effects in sport. Second, the findings will act as a stepping stone for the theoretical development of contact theory in the context of sport. Third, this study will analyze the effects of sport for integration in informal sport settings and the relevant factors that influence the social integration of immigrants.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I review the body of literature regarding sport for development, contact theory, and contact theory's application in sport for development in five sections. The first section centers on sport for development research and its programs. The second section is about sport context: the characteristics of formal sport and informal sport and their effects on sport for development programs. Then, the third section introduces contact theory, the optimal conditions intergroup contact, and the mediating factors of the theory. The fourth section discusses the application of contact theory in sport for development. The fifth section is about the necessity to include a mutual perspective of immigrants and the ethnic majority regarding their social integration experience. Finally, I present my research questions at the end of the chapter.

### **SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Sport for development is a field of study that focuses on the use of sport for community and personal development purposes. The use of sport for development can be traced back to the First World War when developed countries incorporated sport into foreign policies to facilitate growth in developing countries (Burnett, 2001). The use of sport is often driven by the potential benefits it has for social groups, whether the groups are transnational, national, local or individual. This is done because sport is traditionally promoted as a method to build communities and individual characteristics, improve the well-being and quality of an individual's life, reduce exclusion, and increase cohesion (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). Thus, policymakers and practitioners such as UNICEF, Sport England, and the Australian Sports Commission have been utilizing sport for development to target social divisions of race, class, gender, and disability to generate positive and sustained social changes (Hylton & Bramham, 2008).



## **Sport for Social Change**

Social change is one of the objectives that sport for development programs aim to achieve as effective programs purposefully select specific developmental objectives and give priority to targeted populations. In the programs designed to achieve social change, sport has been used as a diversion to prevent deviant behaviors or as a hook to attract participants (Green, 2008). Further, sport has been considered to be able to bring people together and engender social inclusion. Within sport for social inclusion, integration programs are intended to reach minority populations with the goal of assimilating them into the principles and values of the cultures while instilling a sense of social norms (Arnaud, 2002).

## **Sport for Integration**

Valtonen (2004) defined that integration is the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political activities while maintaining one's cultural identity. It is a two-way process that requires adaptation on the part of both the migrant and the host society (Castle et al., 2002). Achievement in employment, housing, education, and health are proposed as both an outcome of integration and a means to success in other areas (Ager & Strang, 2004). Recreational sport can also be viewed as a means and outcome of integration. Sport is an environment for immigrants to practice civic participation, foster social relationships, and learn about the cultural norms of the host society (Spaaij, 2012). Further, Donnelly and Coakley (2002) identified that sport and physical recreation can improve health, develop leadership and communication skills, and improve self-esteem, confidence and one's quality of life. The underlying assumption of literature regarding integrating immigrants through sport and leisure participation is that this participation has positive social, physical, and psychological outcomes.

### ***Research of Sport and Immigrants***

Research on sport, recreation and leisure participation of immigrants has focused on three main ideas. First, the basics of immigrants' participation, including what activities they do, where, with whom, and changes in participation patterns after immigration (Stodolska, 2000; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Taylor & Doherty, 2005). Secondly, research looks at the factors that influence immigrants' participation: cultural and social constraints such as language, discrimination, and financial status (Carrington, Chivers, & Williams, 1987; Frisby, 2011; Grey, 1992; Rublee & Shaw, 1991; Scott, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2006; Stodolska, 1998; Tsai & Coleman, 1999). Thirdly, it examines the integration outcomes of participation: ethnical culture maintenance and/or adaptation to a multicultural environment through sport and leisure participation (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010; Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Krouwel et al., 2006; Müller, van Zoonen, & de Roode, 2008; Spaaij, 2012). Empirical research also demonstrates that mixed friendships through sport are rare for the ethnic majority, but more common between minorities (Elling et al., 2001; Pühse et al., 2011). That is consistent with another research which found that natives have more ethnically homogenous networks than the minority members (Völker, Pinsker, & Flap, 2008).

Still other literature indicates that social integration is in fact the social connections that occur (Ager & Strang, 2004). Social integration through sport builds a social market place that immigrants can gain social connections and social capital. Using the notion of social connections is accorded with dominant political and policy interpretations of integration, which emphasize the needs of societal participation and inter-ethnic contact, and the divisive effects of ethnic enclaves and self-exclusion. Thus, the literature suggests sport-for-integration programs emerged to fulfill the needs of societal participation and reduce ethnic enclaves and self-exclusion (Elling et al., 2001).

### ***Sport-for-Integration Programs***

Based on the idea that sport participation can lead to integration, a variety of sport-for-integration programs have been created for immigrants and minorities. Allen and colleagues (2010) examined international students' participation in sport and its relation with cultural adaptation. The researchers found that both cultural maintenance through sport and cultural adaptation to a multicultural environment through sport occurred. The participation frequency also impacted both cultural maintenance and adaptation. In another study completed by Doherty and Taylor (2007), sport and physical recreation was found to play a meaningful role in the settlement for the young and recent immigrants in Canada. These young immigrants obtained physical benefits, improved language skills and became familiar with mainstream cultures. Finally, Omar, Hamid, and Islam (2010) investigate the elements of sport that led to social integration in Malaysian society and identified the steps taken to achieve social integration through sport. In this case, sport successfully generated social integration and acted as a catalyst to bringing people of different races together and strived together for the nation. In school sport settings, Brown and colleagues (2003) found that white student-athletes who had greater contact with black high school teammates expressed better racial attitudes and supported greater government intervention than those who had less contact with minorities. These effects were more evident among students who played team sports (e.g., basketball, football, volleyball).

Conversely, the literature also supports that sport-for-integration programs can reinforce ethnic differences in the sport setting. Müller and colleagues (2008) found that participants in a soccer event in Amsterdam used that event primarily to serve their own interests (socializing with their own group and cheering for their team) rather than interacting with out-group members. Thus, the event failed to change the dominant

discourse and improve social relations. Other studies conducted in the Netherlands (Krouwel et al., 2006) and in Australia (Spaaij, 2012) both indicated that meeting different people was less valued than researchers expected. This was especially the case for marginalized immigrants who primarily sought to reinforce their ethnic identity. Competitive sport games also frequently result in aggression that further fuels inter-ethnic tensions. In addition, Chu and Griffey (1985) found that playing sports together did not produce more harmonious racial relationships in high school athletic sports; the racial attitudes and behaviors of athletes were not significantly different from non-athletes. As for club sports, previous studies did not support the assumption that a mixed organized sport context offered more social integrative potential than a separate sport context. Both contexts offered the opportunity for their members to obtain social capital, but they might obtain different types of social capital (Theeboom, Schaillee & Nols, 2012).

### ***New Trends of Research***

Sport-for-integration programs have engendered both positive and negative integration results. Theeboom and his colleagues (2012) have developed contextual reasons that may be responsible for the varied results. Further, a study regarding social integration through sports for young immigrants in Switzerland revealed that immigrants were probably much more heterogeneous than researchers assumed. Thus, single-dimension and short-term integration programs would only deal with one facet of social integration for immigrants. Sport, foremost, provides a social place where designs and implementations are critical for the effectiveness and success to the integration programs (Pühse et al., 2011). Elling, and colleagues (2001) also argued that social integration is a multidimensional process; thus, different dimensions of sport can all happen in and through the sport-for-integration programs. Another research project that included

immigrants into the discussions with researchers and city sport and leisure providers, was found to create an inclusion practice for newcomers under multiculturalism (Frisby, 2011). In addition, researchers also included program managers' and staff's perspectives of the sport provision to newcomers (Forde et al., 2015). Thus, sport-for-integration programs have shifted from a functional approach of sport programs focused on bringing benefits to program participants to an interactional approach where participants', managers', and researchers' input is considered. This is done in addition to the contextual effects, for the implementation of the sport-for-integration programs.

The body of literature regarding sport, immigrants, and sport-for-integration programs revealed several important messages. First, research has been concerned with finding out what the degree of immigrants' sport participation is, what factors affect immigrants' participation, what the outcomes of immigrant participation are, and the connections immigrants build through sport. Second, researchers used sport-for-integration programs for a variety of participants in various contexts. These programs were designed for immigrant integration, and used different criteria to evaluate the success of these programs. The common theme among the research was that the negative integration experiences emerged from little interaction and lack of interest to interact. Thus, voluntary participation is critical to the implementation of sport for integration. Third, the process of integration through sport and the characteristics of the contexts where the integration happened can be as important as the integration results. Further, the integration process and the context may be relevant to the success of sport for integration. Thus, current study aims to explore sport for integration in an unorganized sport context and the social interaction among participants in that context to better understand the role of sport in an immigrants' experiences.

## **SPORT CONTEXTS**

The variation of sport contexts creates different sport experiences and outcomes for participants (Chalip, 2006; Warner, Dixon, & Chalip, 2012). Within formal sport programs, the design of programs guides the social process and constructs the overall atmosphere (McCormack & Chalip, 1988). The rules of the programs and the participants' expectations are disclosed to attract participants that agree to meet the standards and expectations. Conversely, informal sport is open to all participants but they are not required to commit to the teams or programs. Thus, it is of great importance to identify the distinction among sport contexts and their respective effects on the social dynamics, process and outcome of social integration of players within these settings.

### **Formal Sport**

Generally, it is believed that formal (organized sports or structured sports) and informal sports (pick-up games or unstructured sports) are two distinctive sport contexts that result in very different social and developmental outcomes. In a recent study (Bowers & Green, 2013), researchers proposed that separating the formal sport and informal sport experiences creates an unnecessary contradiction of the meaning of sport participation. However, in the current practice, management and organization of these two settings little share similar patterns or philosophies. Compared to informal sport, the schedule and format of games and practices of formal sport are structured by program managers and coaches. Referees are hired to enforce standard rules during the competition. In team sport settings, players commit to their team and abide by the known rules, traditions, and cultures of the team. Team players are expected to make positive contributions and sacrifices for the good of the team. Players learn to communicate with the authority and their level of personal involvement in the team is much higher compared to the informal sport. In addition, enrolling in organized sports is often purposeful in that parents of the

youth athletes in organized sports expected their children to learn correct sport skills, teamwork, and to strive for excellence (Chalip, Lin, Green, & Dixon, 2013).

Schools, for-profits/non-for-profits organizations, and policy-orientated sport development projects make up the majority of organized sports. School sports provisions are usually accessible to all students with little fees. However, the prevalence of “pay-to-play” sport programs has been on the rise, causing an issue of access which means that participation in particular sports is available only to the population who can afford it. Meanwhile, these organizations often take or reserve many public spaces and leave the informal sport with very little space and time. As for the sport for development projects, they are initiated and executed for a targeted population in order to achieve certain benefits through sport participation. Organized programs can serve this purpose as well because program managers and coaches could set up the goals and the purpose of the team, promote the culture of the program, and monitor the progress of the project to meet certain objectives.

### **Informal Sport**

Players themselves organize and control informal sport; interpersonal, comprising, and collaborating skills are imperative to creating an enjoyable sport experience. Players decide where and when they want to play, whom they want to play with, and how they interact with others on and off the courts/fields. Informal games are usually competitive and challenging. This occurs because players often adjust the competition format or switch players to maximum the fun of playing. Finally, players of informal sport often possess high level of sport skills and are enthusiastic about sports.

In recent years, the popularity of the pay-to-play sport and the decline of informal sport have caught attentions of scholars of youth sport studies (Ellis & Sharma, 2013; Ogden, 2001; Skirka, 2007). The issue is worthy of attention due to the loss of social

interaction and innovative sport skills that youth used to obtain through informal sport. It is understandable that innovative sport skill development is obviously limited in organized sport where coaching instructions and official rules guide skill learning. It can be argued that social interaction happens in both informal and formal settings. However, different social skills are learned and developed within these two contexts. In informal sport, players resolve and negotiate their disagreement in a civil manner instead of confronting each other or obeying the rules or authority. Yet, players are free to leave the setting if the desired social and playing experiences cannot be obtained. In formal settings, the coaches or adults have authority and resolve issues.

Informal sport is a sport context similar to real life conditions where participation and interaction are voluntary. The interaction in informal sport happens because the participants want to interact with other players rather than being dictated by the design of the program or being held to expectations from sport managers. Thus, to explore the real-world interaction of sport participants and their integration experiences, the informal sport context is an appropriate environment to investigate the social integration of immigrants. In order to systematically examine the interaction among participants in an informal sport context, I applied the contact theory to guide the current research.

## **CONTACT THEORY**

The integration process in sport settings is a pivotal factor for immigrants' integration. Sport provides a social context for integration, however, sport participants' interaction is the foundation for socialization in a group, how participants learn about norms and culture, and integrate into society. Thus, the current study adopted contact theory to examine how the interaction was initiated, maintained, and diminished in informal sport settings.



## **Development of the Contact Theory**

Allport (1954) proposed the Contact Hypothesis when he found contradicting effects of intergroup contact; contact with others generally reduced, but could also intensify prejudice. He explained these effects with a positive factors approach and identified four prerequisite conditions for intergroup contact in which prejudice among out-group members would decrease if these four conditions are present: equal status among group members in the contact situation, group members involved in pursuing common goals, the contact situation promoted cooperation toward achieving common goals, and the authority supports contact and cooperation.

More recent research has found that the four prerequisite conditions proposed by Allport (1954) are not necessary for intergroup contact to happen and to reduce prejudices. These four conditions are optimal conditions that when they are present facilitate interaction and a decrease in prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). The contact effects may still happen without these optimal conditions, but the four conditions are proven facilitators for the interaction and effects of the interaction.

Recent research also revealed that intergroup contact can impact not only a decrease in prejudices and stereotypes but also lead to other positive outcomes such as enhanced empathy, trust and forgiveness, increased knowledge about out-groups, and strengthened social relationships (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Further, negative intergroup contact effects also caught researchers' attention because not all intergroup contact generated positive outcomes and reduced bias and prejudice. Generally, positive effects were widely reported in the literature of intergroup contact. Researchers explained that because participants may have experienced many intergroup contacts, it is natural that participants

would report predominantly positive effects. In addition, if the participant joins the interaction voluntarily, they are less likely to have negative effects since they do not sense a threat or discomfort which may keep others from participation (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011).

### **Additional Factors for Contact Conditions**

Two additional factors have emerged as important optimal conditions for intergroup contact: The development of personal acquaintance and intergroup friendships (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Personalizing relationships generates familiarity toward out-group members, and processing individual information is less complicated than dealing with the information from the whole out-group (Miller, 2002). The other additional factor is intergroup friendship development (Pettigrew, 1998). Intergroup friendships are stronger and deeper relationships than among acquaintances, and studies found that intergroup friendships result in significantly lower degrees of bias and prejudice toward out-group members (Herek & Capitanio, 1996).

According to the development of contact theory, six optimal conditions for intergroup contact are used to know when intergroup contact may happen. Further, outcomes of intergroup contact can have results other than a decrease in prejudice and bias, and the outcomes can be both positive and negative. In addition to “when” the intergroup contact occurs and the results of the contact, the process, the “how” of the intergroup contact and interaction mirror the psychological process of participants. Thus, I review the mediating factors that researchers have identified in recent years.

### **Mediating Factors**

In addition to the optimal conditions of intergroup contact, taken from Allport’s prerequisite conditions, several factors impacting the process of intergroup contact were

identified (Dovidio et al., 2003). From the positive factor approach, these factors were mediators that facilitate the contact effects and promote the intergroup interaction. However, the mediating factors that facilitate intergroup contact in every context and between all groups are not universal. Mediating results and the strength of the factors have to be considered in relation to the participants and the context. Further, mediating factors may not always facilitate intergroup contact, and they can inhibit or mitigate intergroup contact. Negative interactions can create negative effects on group acceptance and attitude just as positive interactions can promote positive interaction (Pettigrew et al., 2011). These mediating factors are functional relations, behavioral factors, affective factors, and cognitive factors (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, Wetherell, 1987).

### ***Functional Relations***

From a functional relations perspective, cooperative interdependence has emerged as group members strive to achieve common goals together. The cooperative interdependence in the contact condition can effectively mediate and positively change group members' behaviors and attitudes in the process through producing more favorable attitudes toward outgroup members (Dovidio et al., 2003). On the contrary, competition within the group or between the groups, the nature of competition and its function can mitigate the contact effects because unfavorable attitudes are generated during competition.

### ***Behavioral Factors***

Pettigrew (1998) stated, "Optimal intergroup contact acts as a benign form of behavior modification. Behavior change is often the precursor of attitude change" (p.71). In addition, the repetition of behaviors makes the intergroup contact comfortable and

prevents the uncertainty of not knowing how to interact. Thus, positive intergroup contact can induce a modification of group members' behavior, and the behavioral changes can reduce dissonance to facilitate greater intergroup acceptance (Dovidio et al., 2003). Furthermore, the greater acceptance is expected to generalize to new contact conditions and to the whole out-group.

### ***Affective Factors***

Emotion has been found to be a critical factor intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Research has found that positive affective connections such as empathy facilitates intergroup contact and its effects (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Stathi & Crisp, 2010). In contrast, negative affective emotions such as threat and anxiety inhibit interaction (Mallett & Wilson, 2010). Thus, reductions in anxiety and increases in empathy have been found to be positive mediating factors that facilitate the intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

### ***Cognitive Factors***

In behavioral science, cognitive factors are internal to people and impact their behavior and behavioral responses to external stimuli (Roy, 2013). Stereotypes and attitudes regarding outgroup members play a critical role for intergroup contact and might mitigate the contact effects because replacing stereotypes requires renewed knowledge and identities (Pettigrew, 1998). The first step to modify the stereotypes is to learn about out-groups and facilitate the contact and interaction with the renewed knowledge (Kawakami et al, 2000). With the knowledge regarding out-groups, participants can increase cultural sensitivity and reduce uncertainty about how to interact with others (Pettigrew, 1998).

Another cognitive factor impacting the contact and interaction is social identity. While individual identity is comprised of personal attributes such as interests and abilities, social identity is comprised of important social groups based on demographic classifications such as race and gender and institutional memberships, such as school and clubs (Turner, 1982). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) proposed that individual identity and social identity play pivotal roles in the development of intergroup preference and bias that impacts an individual's affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions toward others.

Since self-categorization is one of the reasons prejudice emerges and is sustained, it can be used to reduce prejudice as well. Based on Social Identity Theory, a process of decategorization, recategorization, and building common in-group identity was developed to structure intergroup contact and alter the cognitive representations, which negatively affect intergroup contact (Dovidio et al., 2003).

Contact theory is used in the current study to explore the contact and interaction process of immigrants in informal sport. Optimal conditions of contact theory provide “when” the intergroup contact is likely to happen. In addition, the mediating factors explain “how” intergroup contact happens as these factors can facilitate or mitigate the contact effects. Thus, in the current study, immigrants’ intergroup contact is systematically analyzed using contact theory as a heuristic theory, including optimal conditions and mediating factors. The expected contact effects for immigrants are relationship building in the sport setting and relationship extension in off-court settings for social integration.

#### **CONTACT THEORY IN SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The majority of sport studies that have applied contact theory have concentrated on organized sport settings, and mostly in school systems. Early studies found that the

sport setting was not formed to reduce racial prejudice as African Americans and Caucasians had unequal statuses on the teams (Rees & Miracle, 1984). Chu and Griffey (1985) did not find contact effects within sports teams and concluded that sport setting might not be able to provide cooperation and authority support to meet the prerequisite conditions of Allport's Contact Hypothesis. However, in a study conducted by Brown and colleagues (2003), the researchers found positive contact effects. In their study, white college athletes that had black teammates in high school reported more positive racial attitudes. The researchers also found that this effect was more evident in team sports compared to individual sports.

In recent years, more sport studies applied the contact theory because of the prevalence of sport for development programs. As intergroup contact has been verified by numerous studies as a valid method to reduce prejudice and bias for out-group members (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), contact theory became a guiding theory for research focused on interracial relationships, inter-ethnic contact, and sport for development programs that targeted minorities.

Bruening and her colleagues (2014) conducted a longitudinal research incorporating contact theory into the design of sport management courses so that college students had course-related intergroup interaction experiences with school-age children. Research results revealed that positive intergroup contact effects manifested as cooperation and reduced negative attitudes between groups. Bruening, Madsen, Evanovich, and Fuller (2010) also found the effects of reduced prejudice in an after-school program. Similar results of prejudice reduction were evident in a study abroad program (Cunningham, Bopp, & Sagas, 2010). Finally, Lyras and Welty Peachy (2011) used contact theory as a building block for their sport-for-development theory and, therefore, assessed two sport interventions.

Several studies have applied contact theory for intergroup contact in Korean populations. Lee and Cunningham (2013) explored the impact of sport contact on intergroup anxiety and racism in a cross-cultural study. They found that the intergroup anxiety is significantly associated with racial prejudice, and intergroup sport contact did reduce Koreans' racial anxiety toward African Americans, but Caucasian Americans' anxiety toward African Americans did not reduce. Another study examined young Korean American males' perceptions regarding the optimal conditions in the contact theory (Lee & Scott, 2013). Results are consistent with Allport's (1954) conditions and the meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) that optimal conditions are facilitators for intergroup contact rather than necessities. Finally, Kim (2012) conducted a research of Korean women immigrants' recreational activity participation and intergroup contact. Results showed that these women's recreation activities participation such as taekwondo assisted in the development of intergroup friendships, the understanding of culture in a new country, and the reduction of language barriers.

In summation, research has demonstrated that organized programs were the main setting of the majority of research using contact theory. In these organized programs, sport managers designed the program and its implementation to bring specific benefits to program participants. This approach would be ideal for educational programs designed for the youth. However, the organized programs do not mirror the real life conditions adult immigrants encounter because there are few sport program managers and or outgroup members that seek out sport opportunities to interact with immigrants.

The majority of sport for development programs is embedded in organized sport programs in order to systematically recruit targeted participants and offer benefits. In doing so, it is the most efficient and direct way to control the process and control the implementation in order to achieve the program's goal. However, to promote natural

intergroup contact, autonomy-emphasized informal sport may be more suited to meeting this goal when compared to education-orientated organized sport programs. Informal sport provides diverse participants and sport settings that better mirror real intergroup relationships in society. In addition, immigrants' integration is an important concern in a diverse society. Thus, when the sport managers are short of funds and resources for sport-for-integration programs, it is important to find alternative avenues for sport integration such as informal sport.

The other concern that emerged from the literature is the lack of mutual perspectives in contact theory studies in sport settings. Intergroup contact and interaction require mutual efforts from both the ethnic majority and minority. However, previous studies only paid attention to the perspective of one side of the group, which tends to be the minority or immigrants. Thus, mutual views need to be taken into account to further explore ethnic groups' similar and different attitudes (Spaaij, 2013).

### **MUTUAL PERSPECTIVE**

Since integration and assimilation are different (Berry, 1997), to reach effective intergroup contacts and eventually reach successful integration, mutual efforts and the involvement of immigrants and the ethnic majority, are necessary (Spaaij, 2013). However, there is much more one-sided perspective research in the current body of knowledge. In studies regarding immigration issues, attention has been paid to host members' attitudes toward immigrants (Matera, Stefanile, & Brown, 2012). In ethnic stereotype research, the focus was mainly on the dominant groups' view of others and sometimes themselves (Berry, 1997). Recently, a study has provided an exception to this by comparing inter-ethnic contact with a mutual perspective (Martinovic, 2013).

For sport studies, most literature regarding sport for social integration focuses on the attitudes, constraints, and integration process of the ethnic minority and rarely



examined the intergroup contacts from the perspectives of ethnic majority. Brown and colleagues (2003) have examined whether the racial attitudes of White student-athletes changed after being teammates with Black student-athletes. Their efforts to expand the boundaries of knowledge by exploring the attitudes of the ethnic majority are rare, but valuable. Still, only one side of the story was heard. The members of both the minority and majority have to be willing to engage in interaction in order to further knowledge regarding the intergroup contact. Thus, voices from both sides are equally important to facilitate inter-ethnic contacts. Particularly, the studies that looked into both immigrants and the ethnic majority suggest that the determinants of intergroup ties differ in strength and can even work in opposite directions for these groups (Martinovic, 2013; Völker et al., 2008). For example, Völker and colleagues (2008) found that higher educated immigrants are indicative of having more contact with natives, but higher educated natives have fewer contact with immigrants. Thus, the current study adopts the mutual perspectives from immigrants and the ethnic majority to understand the thoughts and experiences of both groups.

Sport can be used as a tool for social change. Sport for development programs have been striving for social integration so that ethnic diversity is increased. Based on previous research, the sport context matters for the success and effectiveness of the program and its practice. The current study hypothesizes that informal sport can be a good setting to study intergroup contact and interaction because it is the natural environment in which a diverse population gathers, and participants have contact opportunities instead of being compelled to make contacts in organized programs.

Updated contact theory has been applied to sport for development in recent years. Contact theory provides the heuristic guide for this study, as it provides the optimal conditions and mediating factors for researchers to explore the process of intergroup

contact. However, the current study argues that in informal sport where management is little, without purposeful program designs, the optimal conditions and mediating factors still function and facilitate the contact effects.

Finally, mutual perspectives from the majority and the minority are critical for the understanding of intergroup contact in informal sport settings; in particular, some factors might result in opposite effects for the ethnic majority.

This study aims to contribute to the field of sport for integration through understanding immigrants' intergroup contact and interaction in informal sport. This work will contribute to the contact theory literature by exploring the facilitation of the optimal conditions and mediating factors for intergroup contact in the informal sport setting. Finally, this study explores if immigrants' sport participation assist their life in the new country and the social integration. Thus, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the interaction experiences of immigrants in informal sport?
2. What contributes to the interaction or non-interaction among participants in informal sport? How is the interaction initiated, maintained, and diminished? To what extent does interaction remain in the sport setting or extend to other settings?
3. Does inter-ethnic interaction in informal sport impact immigrants' social relationships and their integration to the new country? If so, how?

### **Chapter 3: Method**

Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) proposed constructivism as one of the alternative inquiry paradigms in social science research. It was used as the worldview of this study. From an ontology perspective, constructivism views the nature of reality as relative products constructed by individuals and groups, which could be multiple, changeable, and sometimes conflicting. For epistemology (how we know what we know), constructivism views knowledge created through interactions among researchers and respondents, while positivism only considers the objective reality. Lastly, the methodology (the process of research) of constructivism was hermeneutic/dialectic and sought to reconstruct previously held constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, from the perspective of constructivism, the meaningful reality is subjective to individuals and social contexts, and the reality is created and developed through interactions between individuals and their world.

Belief systems of constructivism provide a foundation to understand the inter-ethnic contacts in informal sport because the sport contexts and human activities, as meaningful realities, are constructed, developed, and shaped by interactions between sport participants and their world. Informal sport participants give multiple meanings or perspectives regarding inter-ethnic contact and relationships, which reveal the complexity of social reality in informal sport contexts. In the previous studies regarding recreation, leisure and sport, interpretive qualitative approaches, a constructivism's sub-category, were viable methods used for exploring the meaning of social experiences related to leisure and sport behaviors (e.g., Henderson, 2006; Kim, 2012; Spaaij, 2012). Further, the meanings of the inter-ethnic relationships were derived from participants' descriptive experiences, interpreted by researchers, and imposed on the world rather than independently pre-existing in the world.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The qualitative method approach was used in the current study. The particular strategy of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) was a qualitative descriptive study. This method has been widely used in Nursing and Health studies, and sport, recreation, and leisure researchers have also adopted this method. According to Sullivan-Bolyai, Bova and Harper (2005), the goal of the qualitative descriptive study is unlike the widely used qualitative research designs. It does not seek thick description like ethnography, theory development like grounded theory, nor interpretative meaning of an experience like phenomenology. The focus of qualitative descriptive is placed on the direct communication with the research participants and their description about the social context. For this approach, it is valuable for a researcher to obtain inside knowledge and understand how research participants see their world.

As Sandelowski (2000) stated, knowing the facts is the prerequisite for knowing any experience. No description can avoid personal biases. Thus, in the qualitative descriptive study, the real meaning of participants' description, which could be seen by other people in the same context as an accurate account of their experiences, is the facts in the specific context. Since the facts and experiences regarding the inter-ethnic contact and interaction in informal sport are in need of relevant studies, utilizing the qualitative descriptive study approach will provide insight into the interaction experience among immigrant participants in informal sport.

In addition, in the qualitative descriptive study, the researcher seeks to present the meanings that participants attributed to the experience (Maxwell, 1992), rather than intentionally describing the experience with intensive interpretation or fitting the meaning into conceptual frameworks. Thus, when using this approach the researcher communicates with participants and stays close to the data without transforming the

interpretation, then, the researcher accurately presents the participants' attributes to the experience (interpretative validity; Sandelowski, 2000). This is critical to inter-ethnic studies because the researcher inevitably possesses certain assumptions and sensitivities toward the topic and designed context. Accurately presenting participants' attributes to the experience helps the researcher avoid applying her own interpretation to the data and remain true to participants' descriptions. Thus, the researcher avoids personal inclinations and analyzes the data at face value.

## **METHOD**

The qualitative descriptive study is not based on specific methodological frameworks, but draws from the concepts of naturalistic inquiry, which aimed to "study something in its natural state, or as it is, to the extent that this is possible in a research enterprise" (Sandelowski, 2000, p.337). In the following section, the details of the research method are presented.

### **Instrument**

In a qualitative descriptive approach, the researcher studies the meanings of language (Sandelowski, 2000). To obtain the language, face-to-face interviews were conducted and the participants were asked to describe relevant experiences in informal sport. Then, the researcher pursued the meanings participants made of their experience by focusing on the who, what, where and why of the experience (Sandelowski, 2000; Sullivan-Bolyai et al, 2005).

A semi-structured interview format was used to collect data. With the less formal format, the researcher asked broad questions by following an interview guide then asked further questions based on the participants' answers (Munhall, 2007). An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was developed to guide the interview procedure. Five topics

were discussed: participants' past and current organized sport experiences, participants' current and past informal sport experiences, skill and competition level in informal sport, participants' interaction with other players on and off the court, and playing sport with a diverse population and its impact. Follow-up questions and probes were used to delve deeper into the details of their experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

In addition to face-to-face interviews, participant observation was used to obtain a full picture of informal sport participants' behaviors and interactions in the sport context. It is common for people to say what they believe and do to contradict their actual behaviors. Given the inconstancy of human perception and behaviors, observation can serve as a check against what people say during the interviews (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The goal of using participant observation was to help the researcher learn what perspectives the informal sport participants held. The researcher engaged in participant observation can learn an "insider's" perspective while remaining, inevitably, an "outsider." Further, using participant observation enabled the researcher to become familiar with the culture of the informal sport setting, which was valuable for project development and data analysis. The researcher also interacted with sport participants, places, things, and states of being to witness and participate in human activities. Observing and participating provide a better understanding of the breadth and complexities of human interactions (Mack et.al, 2005).

Six categories of information served as guidelines of observation: individual's general appearance, verbal and physical behavior, personal space, human traffic at the observation site, and people who stand out. Details about these categories are provided in Appendix B.

## **Participants**

This study recruited research participants from two informal sport contexts: an informal volleyball setting at a city recreation center and a lunchtime basketball group on a corporate campus. All of the participants in this study were adults. The adults who joined the informal volleyball at the city recreation center served as the research participants for participant observation. Approximately, thirty players were observed in each volleyball session. Participant observation was not conducted for the lunchtime basketball group due to the access.

Twelve research participants from the informal volleyball group and nine participants from the lunchtime basketball group completed the interviews, but one of the participants in the lunchtime basketball group withdrew his participation after the interview (see Table 1). Fourteen of the research participants were self-defined first-generation immigrants. The first-generation immigrants were recruited to meet the purpose of study, which is to explore immigrants' integration via sport. Immigrants' origins and nationalities were not the criteria for the participant screening; thus, English was the only language used for interviews. Six self-identified non-immigrants were

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Sport	Years in the U.S. as immigrants	Origin
Alex	36	Male	Volleyball	13	Iran
Andy	55	Male	Volleyball	30	China
Catherine	31	Female	Volleyball	4.75	Taiwan
Eric	48	Male	Volleyball	Not Applicable	U.S.A. (Caucasian)
Francis	59	Male	Volleyball	33	Taiwan
Greg	30	Male	Basketball	Not Applicable	U.S.A. (African American)
Jami	42	Female	Volleyball	9	Taiwan
Jarrold	29	Male	Volleyball	2	Dominican Republic
Jeff	33	Male	Basketball	Not Applicable	U.S.A. (African American)
Jeremy	40	Male	Volleyball	17	China
Kevin	43	Male	Basketball	24	Iran
Mina	32	Female	Volleyball	21	The Philippines
Nick	44	Male	Basketball	Not Applicable	U.S.A. (Mexican American)
Randy	50	Male	Volleyball	29	South Korea
Sam	25	Male	Volleyball	Not Applicable	U.S.A. (Caucasian)
Ted	50	Male	Basketball	Not Applicable	U.S.A. (Caucasian)
Thomas	32	Male	Volleyball	3.75	Taiwan
Tony	24	Male	Basketball	6	Taiwan
Wade	35	Male	Basketball	8	The Philippines
Wilson	50	Male	Basketball	31	Vietnam

Table 1: Participant Background Information



included in the research participants to obtain the perspectives of the non-immigrants. Three of them are Caucasian, two of them are African American, and the other one is a Mexican American.

Three of twelve participants from the informal volleyball were female, and all of the participants from the lunchtime basketball group were male. The average age of the research participants was 39.4 years old with a range from 24 to 59. The average length of time that participants lived in the U.S. was 16.6 years with a range from 2 to 33. The averages of age and years lived in the U.S. of the volleyball and basketball group were very similar; thus, the researcher combined the average and reported the information of all research participants together.

## **Procedure**

The researcher conducted participant observation and interviews in a recreation center for informal volleyball players. The local city park and recreation department in Austin, Texas, offers open play volleyball sessions at one of the city's recreation centers. Two courts were available from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm every Sunday. Volleyball matches were open to the public. Players signed their names in the next available spot of the next team on the roster sheets, provided by the recreation center, to form teams. Six players comprised a team and played two consecutive twenty-five-point matches. After these two matches, players could sign-up again and wait for their next match. Approximately, thirty players participated in informal volleyball every Sunday, and the average wait time for matches was twenty minutes.

The researcher visited the recreation center to observe the informal play and interactions among players every Sunday for three months. The researcher also joined the informal play to learn the perspectives held by volleyball players and became familiar

with the culture. Participant observation was recorded as field notes regarding what the researcher experienced, observed, and learned through interaction with other players. Field notes were taken partially during participant observation and partially after the observation and expanded upon as soon as possible before the researcher's memory of the details faded. Then, after developing a relationship, the researcher approached players who were waiting to play informal volleyball at the recreation center, briefly explained the purpose of the study, and requested interviews. Rapport Participants could choose to have on-site interviews or at another convenient time and place. Interviews lasted from 40 to 90 minutes.

In addition to informal volleyball, the researcher recruited interviewees from a group of lunchtime informal basketball players through their mailing list. This group of basketball players played outdoor informal basketball during their lunch break three times a week at a corporate campus. One member of this lunchtime basketball group sent out the interview invitation email to all of the players. Interested players responded to the invitation email and set up a meeting with the researcher at a convenient time and location. The same interview protocol was used for the conversations with the informal basketball players. Interviews lasted from 40 to 80 minutes.

All interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. Research participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy.

### **Data Analysis**

The current study used qualitative content analysis for data analysis. Qualitative content analysis was defined as: "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278). Thus, qualitative

content analysis was a process using inductive reasoning to categorize and condense raw data into themes (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Specifically, the conventional approach of qualitative content analysis served as the guideline of this analysis process. The categories of this conventional content analysis were derived directly from data. The advantage of the conventional content analysis was to gain direct information from research participants without imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This emphasis matched the focus of qualitative descriptive, which is placed on the direct communication with the research participants and their description about the social context (Sandelowski, 2000). In addition, the conventional content analysis was different from other qualitative research such as ground theory method because the conventional content analysis was limited in both theory development and description of the lived experience (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, the conventional content analysis remained useful for concept development or model building (Lindkvist, 1981). The data was analyzed with the aid of a qualitative data analysis program: QSR NVivo 10.

The researcher read through the transcribed texts repeatedly to become familiar with the texts, then, marked specific dialogues that were consistent with the optimal conditions and mediating mechanisms of the contact theory and integration through sport. The quotes that responded to these concepts of contact theory and social integration were collected and organized accordingly. The coding process created four main themes, Optimal Conditions, Interaction Experiences, Moderating Mechanisms, and Relationship Extension, and twelve sub-themes corresponding to the concepts of the contact theory and integration through sport. Nineteen codes emerged from the texts of the informal volleyball group, and seventeen codes were developed from the texts of the lunchtime

basketball group. The results are presented in the following chapter and summarized in Appendix C.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, member checking, reflexivity, and bias management were applied. The member checks were conducted to confirm the accuracy of the findings resulting from the analysis and their interpretation. Member checking involved reviewing the “data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusion” with the interviewees (Creswell, 1998, p. 202) so that they confirmed it’s “accuracy and credibility” (p. 202). Thus, the research participants were contacted after the data analysis process and the results were presented to them to check the content’s accuracy. Three participants responded to the email, and the coding schemes and results were sent to them in emails.

Reflexivity was a process of self-examination as the researcher used internal dialogue to constantly examine what the researcher knew and how she came to know it (Berg, 2004). This process of reflexivity was adopted during data collection and data analysis. The internal dialogue was related to the researcher’s own experiences regarding inter-ethnic contact in sporting contexts. Thus, the researcher constantly contemplated what the interviewees revealed to her and what she actually learned.

Managing researcher bias was an important part of the data analysis. It was critical for the researcher to identify who she is and avoid inserting her own perception and being open to the direct experiences of research participants. Bias note-keeping was adopted to reduce the bias effects from the researcher. While keeping notes about the interview content and impression after each interview, another paragraph was used specifically for bias and personal opinions related to inter-ethnic contact. By doing so, the bias notes served as a self-reminder and reflection for the researcher before she moved on

to the next interview. Further, the researcher reviewed her own immediate thoughts during the data analysis and recognized the bias and its effects.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter is organized based on the themes that emerged when answering the research questions. The results of the informal volleyball group and the lunchtime basketball group are combined and presented together. In the first section of the chapter, two themes emerged when answering the first research question: Personal Interaction and Friendship Opportunity. Another two themes, Optimal Conditions and Moderating Mechanisms, surfaced in the second section when answering the second research question. In the last section, three themes developed from the data that helped to answer the third research question. These themes are Learning New Knowledge and Cultures, Ethnic In-group Identity, and Impacts on Life.

### **THE INTERACTION EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANTS IN INFORMAL SPORT**

In an effort to answer research question one, "What are the interaction experiences of immigrants in informal sport?" Personal Interaction and Friendship Opportunity were the themes that emerged from the data.

#### **Personal Interaction**

The opportunity to create personal acquaintances between members of different groups is critical for the emergence of personalization (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Miller, 2002). Familiarity and trust engendered from personalized communication reduce discomfort and cultivate positive impressions. The interaction and communication process provides an opportunity to reduce negative stereotypes and build personal relationships with out-group members (Miller, 2002).

In the interview data, Personal Interaction emerged as participants discussed their desire for social opportunities, which were to meet new people and possibly make friends

through informal volleyball. Furthermore, the descriptions regarding interactions on the court further demonstrated the Personal Interaction among members of different groups.

Research participants constantly discussed their desire to either meet new people or socialize with their current friends in informal volleyball. The open nature of informal volleyball and a nearby seating area where players waited for the next game provided a convenient social environment where players could sit, interact, and chat with one another. Jarrod (29 years old, immigrant from the Dominican Republic) and Francis (59 years old, an immigrant from Taiwan) specifically emphasized that informal volleyball is not only about playing volleyball but also making friends. As Jarrod said:

It's not just play. It is making more friends, that's the purpose. I first play with them and then I meet them that's how...like that's one of the best way that you can make more friends, playing sports. Because you first play with them, talk to them and then you start good relationship.

Francis added:

I play volleyball and I also make friends on the court. I talk to people when I meet new people sometimes. If I like them, I continue to talk to them absolutely for play, that's the way you make friends.

In addition to this, some participants described their past experiences as new residents moving in a town regarding building their social network with local informal volleyball players. As Mina (32 years old, immigrant from the Philippines) recalled:

When you come here, you don't know anybody. Because I love playing sports, I figured that there were some people who would have the same interests as me and so that's what I found. When you start going to the open volleyball courts and the meet up, that's how I met everybody. I mean, everybody seems very nice.

Thomas (32 years old, immigrant from Taiwan) also shared similar experiences when he moved to the U.S. from abroad. He said:

When I arrived in the U.S., making friends is one of my motivations to play sports. I wanted to meet new people and create more opportunities to speak English. I think playing sports is a good ice-breaker for me to make new friends

due to the language barrier. I think I am a good player so it could be a start for me to chat with others. Gradually, I start to enjoy playing sports with people I don't know and get to know them a little bit.

Thus, the social opportunities in informal volleyball were one of the attractions for participants in addition to the games.

Sam (25 years old, Caucasian) considered informal sport to be more for social benefits. He explained that, “by having opportunities to come out to play something informal was really kind of break down that barrier and obstacle for social interaction.” He further provided detailed descriptions regarding his social experiences in informal volleyball. He said:

People are interacting when they are taking breaks from games because there is a big seating area or usually hangout afterwards. I like the mix of competitive time where I can get out the competitive spirit and also have some recreational time where I can enjoy the company.

Thus, social opportunities in informal volleyball were an added benefit of playing volleyball. Participants expressed their desire to meet people and make new friends. Further, it was a way for people to construct a new network when they relocated.

A sport acquaintance is a person who people play sports with, are slightly familiar with, and have little contact and interaction off the court. Sport acquaintances meet in sports facilities where they become familiar with each other's game (their individual style of play) then, they may exchange contact information about playing together in other gyms. Participants referred their to their sport acquaintances as their “volleyball friends” and had built relationships with them through volleyball. However, their relationships only stayed at the courts.

In informal volleyball, consistent with the culture of volleyball, players often cheered for teammates' good performance and efforts on the court. In addition, some



players even encouraged teammates when they made errors on the court. As Alex (36 years old, immigrant from Iran) stated:

When you encourage people even though they don't do what you're expect them to do, physically they're not where you are, but at least emotionally and psychologically, when you encourage your teammates you keep your team's spirit up. Once you start nagging a player, you bring your whole team down.

However, it is inevitable that some players showed dissatisfaction and complained when teammates made errors. Catherine (31 years old, immigrant from Taiwan) expressed her dislike towards the negative interactions on the court, she said:

There are people like to complain and murmur [on the court] if somebody doesn't receive a ball well. It's quite annoying. To put it in a good way is that they would teach you, but not in a good way it's very irritating.

Thus, the attitude that was unfavorable for lowered skilled players did not do any good to anyone but spoil the overall atmosphere at the court.

Some of the interactions on the court were related to volleyball tactics, especially the offensive plays. Since teams were usually randomly formed, the rotated setter was not likely to know each teammate's offensive preferences. Thus, many of the interactions on the court were brief tactical discussions. Furthermore, successful cooperation on the court was the catalyst for players to chat and develop positive impressions towards their teammates. As Thomas described:

We play quite well and can set up plays for each other. So it is natural that we will chat. I think my interaction with other players is developed on the court and then extend to the seating area. When we play well together on the court, it's more likely we will talk after the game. Otherwise, without those click moments there were little connection on the court and people just walk to the bench individually [without chatting] after the game. You can tell the differences.

As a result, a social pattern was developed as interactions extended from good collaboration on the court to the conversation after the game.

Thus, a social pattern emerged as players interacted on the court if the game went well or the play was successful. Then, players talked and walked to the seating area together after the game. At the seating area, they continued talking about the game or extended the conversation to other relevant topics. As a result, players started to greet and chat with each other more often and build relationships as sport acquaintances. Conversely, when the game did not go well, players communicated less on the court, walked to the seating area separately or with very little interaction with each other, and then signed up and waited for the next game.

For informal basketball, the lunchtime basketball was hosted in a work environment. As Wilson (50 years old, immigrant from Vietnam) described, “we get to know each other when we sit there between games and talk a little bit.” Players became familiar with each other when they sat in the bench area between games and made small talk. The small talk topics were usually basketball or sports related but once in a while, they talked about work. Personal life was rarely a topic for this occasion. Nick (44 years old, Mexican American) also said that the amount of time for players to sit and have small talk was really only between games when they were waiting to play again. This was because outside of work, players went separated ways and had their own groups of friends.

Even if the relationships did not extend beyond work, the participants described an interest in building social opportunities at work. Participants revealed that they liked to meet new people who shared common interests and to socialize with friends in sport settings. Thus, they perceived that informal basketball provided a good opportunity to network and built relationships with colleagues from different departments or teams. Nick was interested in meeting people from different facets of the company. He described his intention and thoughts:

I do not know where everybody was, but I try to ask everybody where you work because in my job, I am taking all kinds of technology from various parts of the company. I need to know people working on all kinds of areas. It is a good form of networking, an unbelievable form of networking.

Thus, regardless of participants' intention for socializing, the fact that players spent time together at the court created social opportunities to start relationships.

From the perspective of socializing with friends, Ted (50 years old, Caucasian) said, "I enjoy hanging with those guys [from the basketball group]. There are a lot of good guys there." Greg (30 years old, African American) does not intentionally seek social opportunities in informal basketball and determined to focus on competing and enjoying the fun of basketball. However, he found the connection he built with people in the basketball setting rewarding. The connection became a catalyst for the benefits, competition, and fun which he pursues in informal basketball:

I found that I am connected with the people I played with just through playing the sports, and it is just easy to connect to people that way. I find it helpful to connect with more people...because it might bring out a certain interest about what you are trying to do...In the case of sports, you are just trying to play and win a game.

Like Greg's experience of connecting with people through sport, participants obtained social opportunities and met great people which brought additional benefits to their sport participation.

Participants identified both positive and negative on-court interactions in this lunchtime basketball group. Positive interactions that players experienced on the court included encouragement and instructions to and from their teammates. Wilson explained:

You try to shout encouragements, instructions, because they may not be on the same team all the time. But during the game, you kind of shout instruction or encouragement as much as possible. You try to win if that doesn't work. The thing is you have learned that you got to leave whatever happened on the court.

Conversely, negative interactions were arguments derived from disagreements about foul calls, which was consistent with the common informal basketball culture. According to

Ted, this group had a policy to “respect the call.” However, players tended to not respect the questionable calls. Wilson described the arguments as “conflicts on the court.” He said:

Certain players who have been out there have some disagreements, come to face to face argue back and forth more than once. Some players hold a grudge against another particular player. Whenever they match up against each other, they can trigger the conflicts easily.

Even though the lunchtime basketball group was hosted in a work environment which regulated the players’ behaviors on the court, some players “crossed the line” and engaged in physical or verbal fighting with other players. Ted described the on-court interactions he saw:

I think for the most part the game regulates itself. We have a policy to respect the call that doesn’t always happen. We’ve had some cases where there’s been some calls that have been questioned and people have argued, and it’s come down to shouting matches and foul language. So they said respect the call, just respect it and keep playing.

Tony (24 years old, immigrant from Taiwan) added that arguing was common in informal basketball and no exception for this lunchtime basketball group. He said:

[Arguing for foul calls] is not a specific issue for this group. We had efforts in trying to regulate foul callings, but with pick-up basketball, that’s just the nature of the game.

Thus, both positive and negative interactions were common for this group. While encouragement and instruction on the court could facilitate the cooperation among teammates, the argument, a common scene according to players, might mitigate their relationships.

### **Friendship Opportunity**

Making friends with out-group members is an important development in the interaction process which leads to reducing intergroup bias (Herek & Capitanio, 1996;

Pettigrew, 1997& 1998). Participants' off-court interaction experiences with other volleyball players after the games or during their free time comprised the Friendship Opportunity. Believing in one's sport personality, common interests, and life stage were sub-themes within this larger theme of Friendship Opportunity. They represent factors that influenced the nature and likelihood of developing interactions beyond the sport setting.

Research participants explained that off-court social activities were important catalysts to strengthening relationships from sport acquaintances to personal friends. As Sam said, "Since we play volleyball, we usually see each other and play at other times and hangout, do a few things." Randy (50 years old, immigrant from South Korea) described the activities he and friends did off the court as, "We would have parties, birthday or whatever. One friend, we actually went to Super Bowl together." Finally, Mina often spent time off the court with her friends she met at the volleyball courts. She said, "They're really cool. I actually hung out with them yesterday after game night. Then tomorrow, I'm going to go watch soccer with them."

Participants with the same ethnic backgrounds had frequent off-court social activities and consequently built close relationships with group members. With these close relationships and developing friendships, the players with the same ethnic backgrounds became a small group, a clique, on and off the court. Their close relationships on and off the court reinforced the group, and, gradually, playing volleyball became one of their group activities. Catherine developed her ethnic network through her friends in the volleyball clique. She said, "I got to know some Taiwanese people and become good friends with them. We go eat together quite often and do a lot of things together. I got to expand my social life through them and know their friends." Francis also described his friendships with members of the clique in this way, "We do things after

the games together so there are more activities and then of course, we are good friends. We are comfortable with each other.”

Participants with immigrant backgrounds also described their off-court activities with others immigrants with different ethnic backgrounds. Jami (42 years old, immigrant from Taiwan) developed close friendships with other internationals and became good friends with a Chinese and a Mexican. She said:

I have a lot of things in common to talk about with that Mexican. When I am not travelling for work, all three of us every day or every other day just play sports and outside of sports, sometimes, we hang out at the restaurant or go to a movie. One of them also helped me with my lawn; he came to my house to mow the lawn.

Andy (55 years old, immigrant from China) lived in New York City a few years ago and played soccer in neighborhood parks for ten years. He met many immigrants from all over the world through pick-up soccer games, and he has close relationships with several of them and their families. Even though he has moved to another part of the country, he stayed in contact with his close friends in New York. He shared his experiences:

We would eat, chat, have barbecue, and go to the beach together. We still keep contact through phone calls. We would call during the holidays, Father's Day or Mother's Day because I also know their families. Soccer is fun that people would bring their family to the field. They would bring parents, siblings, and children altogether to play or watch them play. They would have barbecue there and we could share the food after the game. There were people organizing the social activities such as after game gathering, fishing events, parties in someone's house, travel, and take the cruises.

Thus, Andy not only extended the relationships off the court but became life friends who he kept in contact with for years.

In addition to friendships with immigrants, one research participant, Francis, talked about his friendship with an ethnic majority. Francis played in several open volleyball gyms for at least ten years. Based on the researcher's observations, he

interacted with his small ethnic group most of the time and enjoyed their companionship. He sometimes chatted with other players at the seating area. However, he had a long-term friendship with an ethnic majority. He said:

I kind of make friends with him maybe because the age or maybe he is from Florida and my son lives there. He invited me to his house watching volleyball with him. We would go to watch volleyball, so when we get together, we have a lot to talk about. But he is busy with travelling and does not come to play as often as he used to.

Thus, Francis' friendship with an ethnic majority was built upon their common interests (including volleyball) and they maintained the relationships for years. Consequently, participants were involved in off-court leisure activities with their volleyball friends and developed relationships with personal friends.

For the lunchtime basketball participants, after personalization of the interaction and communication at the court, building further relationships such as friendships could reduce the intergroup bias. However, in this lunchtime basketball group, participants explained that the relationships did not extend beyond the workplace and remained as basketball acquaintances.

In terms of relationships among the lunchtime basketball players, participants considered the relationships among the participants as sport acquaintances which were limited to the informal basketball context. As Ted stated:

I consider them friends, but they are on the basketball acquaintance. If I see them in the cafeteria, I will stop them and talk to them. But, the friendship is basically just there on the court. They're just good guys and I think we have a lot of the same sensibilities.

Nick had a close relationship with players in his former corporate sport programs where he had been actively involved for more than ten years. He thought the length of time was

pivotal to the development of the friendships among players, and he was only with the current group for a short time. He said:

I have not connected on that at that level with anybody on the team, or I would probably say, "Hey, let's go have a beer. Do you want to go dinner? Do you want to come to my house for whatever?" So, it probably has not manifested itself from that.

Thus, Nick identified "Time" as an important factor for building close relationships and saw the potential to build friendships with players if he remained in this group.

With the sport acquaintance relationships, most players did not associate with each other outside of work unless they worked in the same department or played another sport together. When players worked in the same department, they were likely to spend more time together, which led to interactions off the court. Jeff (33 years old, African American) had off-court interactions with another player because they worked together and their children are a few months apart in age. Thus, they had opportunities to see each other off the court and chat about parenting when they had breaks. Wilson used to have frequent off-court interactions with another player who worked in Wilson's department. They shared common interests so they watched sports and went to lunch and happy hour together in addition to playing in the lunchtime basketball group. However, the player was assigned to another work team at a new corporate campus and seldom played with the lunchtime basketball group anymore. As a result, Wilson and that player did few things together and interacted much less than they used to. Furthermore, participants revealed that some players spend off-court time together playing another sport, and Ted revealed:

A few of the players do some other activities based around sports. For example, they play softball, fantasy football, and other fantasy games together. So I think some of them get together.



Thus, under several conditions, participants associated with players they met regularly for work purposes off the court. They had opportunities and frequent contact to expand their conversations from basketball to other topics. Otherwise, the off-court interactions remained sport related.

Conversely, Kevin (43 years old, immigrant from Iran), found the interaction between colleagues in his current company to be very different from his experiences in his home country. He said:

That's the weird thing that co-workers here once they leave, nobody has interaction with them. In my country, people come and go, like my wife's co-worker, they still hang out together. I don't know if they hang out with anyone after work. I think once you have family and kids, you don't really hang out.

Thus, Kevin's concerns might result from multiple reasons as his colleagues could have family to take care of after work or they separated their work life and personal life for certain reasons.

In summary, players in the lunchtime basketball group generally have positive interactions. The negative interactions tend to center around disagreements about foul calls. However, players have little off-court interactions unless they work on the same team or play other sports together. Since the social opportunities only available between games and relationships among players did not extend to off-court contexts, research participants considered other players as basketball acquaintances rather than friends.

### ***Believing in Sport Personality***

Participants did not become personal friends with every volleyball acquaintance they met in the gym as they were not friends with everyone. They befriended people who had an attitude, interest, or personality that was acceptable to them. Thus, participants indicated that meeting people and making friends through sports were less risky. Jami

said, “Basically, I believe that people who want to do sports or wanted exercising regularly, they're nice people, they're healthier and they're more open-minded.” Jarrod also said that he was likely to build friendships in informal sport since people had already shared the love for volleyball and it could be the foundation to extend volleyball relationships. He stated:

Most of the people who like to practice sports are really nice when you know the person. If somebody is practicing sports, they are doing something really good. People who play sports, they have similar characters.

Thus, the belief and confidence that sport practitioners were nice people with good characters were one of the motivations for participants to befriend their volleyball acquaintances.

### ***Common Interests***

The shared interest among participants was another motivation for participants to extend their relationships off the court. Volleyball or sport, in general, was the common interest and the foundation of relationship building. As Jami described, “I want to hang out with people that has common interests so we can do sports together and watch sports together, talking about sports together.” Mina and Eric also expressed that when they moved to a new town, they would reach out to people who shared the same interests with them. In this case, they looked for people who liked volleyball. Mina said:

When you come here [moving here], you don't know anybody. Sometimes, you have to go out there and be like, “Okay. Let's see” Because I love playing sports, I figured that there was a lot of [people like sports]. There are some people who would have the same interests as me and so that's what I found. When you start going to the open volleyball courts and the meet up, I'm like, “That's how I met everybody.”

Eric said that he would do the same as Mina if he moves to a new place. He said:

I think that volleyball...it was promising for everything, whatever you're good at can be in-road into the new culture or the new community that you're seeking to whether you're trying to move there or become part of it, if that's your avenue for...If I were to move to a new city, I will definitely seek out—That would be one of the very first things I would seek out is, where's volleyball? And then I would make my connections to do that group. That would be my way of connecting, and so it definitely is a sport with a lot of international.

Thus, the common interest of volleyball served as the catalyst for conversations and social activities, which were pivotal for developing friendships, and could be organized around volleyball. The intergroup interaction in the volleyball setting could be facilitated as informal volleyball players genuinely loved the sport and chose to participate in the informal games, which made it an ideal environment to promote interactions among participants.

### ***Life Stage***

Life stage was a factor that influenced the likelihood of whether informal volleyball players interacted with other players off the court. Since people had different priorities at each stage of their life, responsibilities of taking care of a family could reduce players' free time to participate in off-court social events. Jeremy said:

I don't go to those social hangouts because I have already been out for several hours. I have to go home and take care of kids. We have to prepare for school and work, be ready for Monday. If I am single or my wife and kids are not in town, I will probably hang out with them afterwards.

In contrast, retired and single participants indicated that they have time for off-court social activities and look forward to these activities. Jami said, "It's easier for people like us (single) to hang out."

Thus, life obligations affected not only informal volleyball participation but also the social activities with volleyball friends. It became less likely that the friendship could

be personalized to long-term friendships and improved intergroup relationships in meaningful ways.

The age of the lunchtime basketball group members ranged from twenties to fifties; thus, participants had different priorities because they were at different stages of life. The priorities affected participants' thoughts about their social relationships, competition, and the desire to win. Tony, the youngest member of the lunchtime basketball group, was single and had not started a family. He noticed that most members of the lunchtime basketball group were not in his age group and already had a family. Thus, he rarely did social activities with the basketball group members because they had families to take care of after work. He said, "We just hang out during lunch breaks for basketball, and most of them have to get back home after work." Jeff revealed that his family was his priority for him after work. Consequently, he had little time to invest in social activities with his basketball acquaintances.

Additionally, thoughts about competition and winning also changed as players became older. They did not feel the need to win all of the games in informal sport. When they were young, they were more competitive and wanted to win at all costs. However, winning was less important as people grew older and had other priorities in their lives. Enjoying playing basketball became a priority in informal basketball, and winning was merely a peripheral benefit. Wilson described his change in thought about winning:

When I was young, I have the competitiveness a lot and try to do whatever I can to win. I do not have that anymore. [I] just realize there is other thing out there much more important than winning the game. Now you got family, you got work, make sure kids have food on the table. That is why sometimes when you got players get into fight, it is not worth it. You can lose your job by fighting on the basketball court. If you punch somebody and that player get hurt, you can go call security, and this guy will lose his job. They have no tolerance for fighting.

Consequently, the life stage which participants were currently at plays an important role in their involvement in their informal sport group. When most of the participants were married and had families, the likelihood for participants to organize off-court social activities was low. Furthermore, as participants became older, their thoughts about winning changed. Participants still played basketball competitively, but they did not see winning as the goal of playing sports. In this lunchtime basketball group, participants were cautious with how intense their arguments on the court became to avoid any opportunity which could jeopardize their jobs since playing basketball during lunch breaks was a mental relief from work, not their priority in a work environment.

In conclusion, Personal Interaction surfaced from the data to describe informal sport participants' interaction experiences at the court. The other theme, Friendship Opportunity, emerged to present the off-court interaction among informal sport participants. Further, research participants explained their inclination to believe in sport personalities and that common interests served as a relationship catalyst and one's life stage extended relationships in off-court settings.

#### **FACILITATORS AND INHIBITORS OF INTERACTION IN INFORMAL SPORT**

Research question two asked, "What contributes to the interaction or non-interaction among participants in informal sport? How is the interaction initiated, maintained, and diminished? To what extent does interaction remain in the sport setting or extend to other settings?" Toward the end of responding to these questions, Optimal Conditions and Moderating Factors were the themes that emerged within the data. The sub-themes under Optimal Conditions are cooperation, common goals, supportive norms and skill level. The sub-themes under Moderating Factors are functional relations, behavioral factors, affective factors, and cognitive factors.

## **Optimal Conditions**

Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis proposed that four prerequisite conditions are necessary to improve intergroup relationship through contact and interactions: cooperation, common goals, supportive norms, and equal status. However, recent studies have suggested that these four conditions are optimal conditions and unnecessary for positive effects of intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Rather, they are facilitators that enhance the positive effects of intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). One of the optimal conditions proposed by Allport (1954), equal status, was hardly achieved in informal sport settings. Rather, skill level emerged as a more salient condition. Players' status in the setting was primarily established based on their sports skill levels, and the variation of sports skill levels created unequal statuses among participants. Consequently, the variation of skill level and its consequent effects on players' statuses are discussed as the last part of the theme.

## ***Cooperation***

In the contact hypothesis, cooperative interdependence is necessary for groups to work together in pursuit of common goals (Blanchard et al., 1975). The interview data revealed that the cooperation among the informal volleyball players occurred during their collaboration on the courts to create competitive rallies. This cooperation was fundamental for research participants to pursue competitive informal volleyball games. They shared a sense of competitiveness and intended to select gyms with a high level of play to achieve this goal. These participants preferred to play with skilled players because it is more likely for them to have competitive games this way, and cooperation was key to accomplishing this. Thomas added his explanation regarding his choice of playing in a specific gym:

The average level of play here is probably the highest among the open volleyball in this town. So I play in this gym regularly. It is more competitive and the rallies are longer. I am selective. I prefer to go somewhere I like and I know I would have a good time there. There is one open play volleyball every Wednesday at a recreation center I used to go. However, I stopped going there because the level of play is lower than what I want.

Furthermore, the participants indicated that they wanted to release their competitive spirit through competition against the team over the net, have good rallies, and set up offense plays rather than winning because of the other teams' errors. As Francis stated, "Most people do it because they like volleyball, I think that's the most important thing and then most players want to win. Sports have some competitiveness in it so people don't want to have a lousy game." Thus, players were inclined to select the gyms where competitive games could be created (through cooperative interdependence).

In the lunchtime basketball group, the interview data showed that the cooperation among the lunchtime basketball players was their collaboration on the courts to create competitive games and their preferences of making even teams.

The lunchtime basketball participants pursued competitive informal basketball games. Due to the nature of the game of basketball, teamwork and cooperation are essential for creating competitive games. Research participants explicitly stated that they participate in the game of basketball because of the competition, and they tried to avoid unevenly matched games. They also thought informal basketball was a good setting to unleash their competitive spirit. As Jeff said:

I love competition. Growing up playing sports all my life as an athlete, I love competition. I love competing whether it's really serious or even just guys out shape who are trying to get back in shape.

He further expressed his preference of having "two very good matched teams" for a highly competitive game rather than a lopsided game. When asked about the competition in informal sport, Greg described informal basketball as a good place to release his

competitive spirit because he chooses to be less competitive with his colleagues at work.

He explained his preference of highly competitive games in sports:

I would probably rather play in a highly competitive [games] because it brings out the best in people, or it can bring out the worst in people. It brings out the best skills in people. I like playing when everyone has given their all and that's kind of just a general in anything you do. Anything you do, I like it when people give their all and try their hardest and give it their best so when you relate that to sports, I will probably prefer a more competitively, more competitive everything because my teammates are giving out their best.

Thus, participants pursued the competitiveness in their basketball games and expected their teammates to perform at their best.

Furthermore, participants offered their experiences regarding the make-up of competitive games. Players possess a similar level of skill and basketball knowledge can create a competitive match-up. Wilson has played informal basketball for more than thirty years. He described his preference of players' skill level:

You do not want to have a wide range of skill. I mean you would like to play with people similar to your skillset. If you play with players who are much higher than you, you kind of get afraid, and that can impact your game. If you play with players who are below your level, it is not fun because you feel like you can do anything you want. The best scenario is a group of player kind of around your skill level. I think it is important. So to have the right players with the right skill set, it would be much more enjoyable.

As a result, informal basketball players want to play with people who share a similar skillset and knowledge in order to have competitive games.

### ***Common Goals***

Goal-orientated efforts toward a common goal are essential to reduce prejudice and promote intergroup relationships (Allport, 1954). Chu and Griffey's (1985) research showed that athletic teams' efforts to win, which were a common goal, promoted interracial interaction and relationships. However, in the interview data, fun and exercise



were constantly discussed as the Common Goals for informal volleyball participation. Winning was not identified as a necessary goal for participants. Consequently, fun and exercise manifested as the common goals among the volleyball participants.

Research participants revealed their shared desire to have fun and their playing mindset in informal volleyball. Thomas described the enjoyment he obtained from informal volleyball:

I like volleyball because it's a team sport. I get to play with other people and hit the ball back and forth. Otherwise, I would go jogging by myself. I also enjoy the execution of volleyball tactics and the flow of the game.

Mina stated that having fun through playing volleyball is her escape from the stress in her daily life:

I actually do love playing these sports. It kind of takes the stress out. When I play on the court, I won't have to think about other things. Like if something was stressing me out from work, I just go play volleyball and have fun.

In addition to having fun playing volleyball, two research participants indicated that teaching others to play volleyball is gratifying for them. Jarrod said:

I don't care about skill, I want to have fun. And if somebody doesn't know how to play, I try to teach them because I don't think about myself, I think about the other people too. If somebody doesn't know how to play, you teach that person, it's better because they will do the thing that you like. If you can have more people playing, it's better.

Eric (48 years old, Caucasian) also expressed his passion about teaching, "If I see someone who wants help and needing help, I would help him or her with their skills. I love doing that. I mean, I really enjoy teaching."

Furthermore, the joy of skill improvement was a part of the "fun" that research participants commonly sought in addition to the joy of playing volleyball. They wanted to improve their performance by playing in the games. They mentioned that learning from the better players was a good way to improve volleyball skills and/or concepts.

Additionally, players in informal volleyball have a variety of playing styles, which provides different perspectives and ways to play the game. As Thomas stated:

Players have different concepts and habits about positioning on the court. If people play with the same group all the time, they will get used to the positioning and formation of this group. Playing with a variety of players provides opportunities to learn something new such as different styles of play, on-court movement and setting up offensive plays.

Mina also agreed that the good way to grow or become a better player is playing with all different kinds of players to practice and adjust to various conditions. Thus, the game of volleyball brought various kinds of fun and enjoyment to the players, as the majority of participants expressed that having fun was the primary goal for their participation, which they shared with other participants.

Another common goal shared among players was exercise. Most research participants indicated that they play informal volleyball to exercise. Andy and Jarrod specifically said that they wanted to stay fit and healthy through exercise, and they chose to play volleyball because of the game was fun. As Catherine said, “I play for fun and health now. I want to exercise.”

Furthermore, volleyball is a team sport that requires a certain number of players to play formal games. Thus, informal volleyball is the ideal context for enthusiastic volleyball players to exercise and have fun at the same time even though some players recognized the movement in volleyball may not be an ideal exercise for their age group. Eric explained that “One [benefit] is exercise and just try to stay fit. But quite frankly, volleyball is not the best thing for it. But it's the thing I know how to do, so it's the thing I do.” Jeremy (40 years old, immigrant from China) added that to exercise was his primary goal, which he shared with other participants, in informal volleyball because he did not

have time to exercise during week days when he was busy with work and family obligations.

Thus, having fun and exercise were the common goals of informal volleyball players. Generally, both fun and exercise were discussed collectively because research participants considered volleyball as a fun exercise and enjoyed it so much. With these common goals in mind, they cooperated to create competitive games, which generated more exercise opportunities and a fun atmosphere on the court.

In the lunchtime basketball group interview data, fun and exercise were constantly discussed as the goals for the lunchtime basketball participation. Consequently, fun and exercise manifested as the common goals in the data.

Exercise seemed to be a common goal for all of the basketball participants, as they indicated that exercise was one of their primary motivations and goals to playing informal basketball. They considered basketball to be a fun exercise and a good way to stay in shape. For example, Wade (35 years old, immigrant from the Philippines) treated the running in basketball as a cardiovascular exercise. Greg also explained:

The number one benefit I seek is to stay in shape, especially as I get older, I realized that I do not like just to go to the gym and run on the treadmill, I like to have my workout and my fitness have more purpose so I like to stay in shape and play a sport to stay in shape.

Two other middle-aged participants, Ted and Nick, also identified exercise as their primary goal of playing basketball. Ted said, “I am looking for exercise that does not feel like exercise. I am having some fun and burning some calories.” Nick added, “The obvious thing in my age is really about exercise. I am forty-four. But it is not just exercise. It is like more of fun fulfilling exercise.” Furthermore, participants talked about exercise and fun together as informal basketball is an appealing exercise because of the fun element of basketball.

Participants talked about their love of the game, and the fun and joy of playing basketball, which were the driving force of their participation. As Wilson explained, “The reason I play basketball is I enjoy it. I hate running and jogging because it is boring. That's why I keep playing basketball. It is for joy and keeping in shape.” Similarly, Wade shared his love for basketball:

I just like playing. It is my hobby. I play all the time, because it is my hobby and it's also a good exercise. Exercise and love for the game. I just want to continue playing, because if I stop playing, I would be rusty. This is my main sport.

Greg found another perspective to enjoy and appreciate sports through participation and said:

I watch a lot of sports and I think it's kind of keep you on it to stay or just to continue to participate in the sport and not just watch it and say oh that was really easy. It gives you another appreciation to play a sport while watching it.

Thus, the lunchtime basketball setting is ripe for good intergroup contact because of the shared goals.

### ***Supportive Norms***

Intergroup contact is likely to happen when it occurs in the context of supportive norms (Landis, Hope, & Day, 1984). With explicit support from the authority, law, or social custom, intergroup contact is more likely to be accepted and engender positive effects. The participants suggested that the setting provided Supportive Norms. The support was manifest in the setting characteristic of open access to the game as every player was welcome to join the informal play.

One central concept of informal sport is the open access to the games, which means everyone is welcome to play regardless of the level of skill, gender, race, age, etc. Since players with a various level of skills are welcome to play, the competition intensity changes based on the participants' level of play. As Jami explained:

If there are more advanced players, good players and competitive players would show up more often. Then, there will be a really good competition for a while. However, when less skilled players join the play, they would squeeze out good players who would prefer to play somewhere else or in other times. It is difficult for different levels players to compete together, especially for team sports.

Jami's observation also reveals a common thought in informal volleyball, no commitment. Informal volleyball players are neither committed to any specific teams nor facilities. Players are free to play in any gym if they are not satisfied with the settings and/or people in the current facilities. Thus, Supportive Norms were expressed as players come and go in the informal volleyball setting.

Informal volleyball players also face an issue about the inconsistency of the competition level because players compete against teams with a different make-up each time. Research participants discussed the challenges of playing with a mixed group of talent. As Eric commented:

It's hard for people because it's a mix of recreation, to middle to high...so, it's a real mix. So what happens is you get three or four people that really know how to play well. And you'll get two people, and it's like a chain with a weak link, and it just breaks and so it just keeps breaking and breaking and people get frustrated.

Thus, some players would show their dissatisfaction toward lower-skilled players while some players further demonstrated Supportive Norms through tolerance and encouragement.

"Open to all players" was the stated rule for the informal setting; however, each group shaped its own culture and requirements for players' skill level and competitiveness. Thus, an appropriate level of seriousness and competition emerged: otherwise lower-skilled players would have left the setting when they could not meet the expectation and more serious players would have found the games not as competitive as they wanted. As Mina said, "There are some good players but they will get very, very

serious. You have to understand that it's open volleyball. You don't have to be that serious." Eric also suggested:

You win more games and have more fun if you just stick to the basics. And try not to over-complicate things even if you know, theoretically, how something is done, it doesn't mean you should be doing it, especially with two new people or even one new person.

As a result, keeping the game simple resulted in the easiest way to play in informal volleyball.

Compared to organized sports programs, research participants thought that the open nature of informal sport reduced the barrier to enter the game and further reflected Supportive Norms. In addition, the game is not as competitive as it is in organized sports where players are ranked specifically by skill levels. Therefore, the atmosphere and settings of informal sport creates more opportunities for people to participate in sports, interact with other players, and build friendships. According to Sam:

Typically, they are more open to create friendships in informal sports. The ones in the organized sports are tend to play the role as competitors and teammates. They are much focused and kind of delineated. Whereas the informal, they do play more of a friendly and open-mind social role.

Thus, open access, the primary characteristic of informal volleyball, contributed to the gathering of volleyball players with a variety of skillset and diverse backgrounds. Once players adjusted to the culture of the group and the appropriate level of seriousness, the informal volleyball setting had a social function which supported diverse populations' interaction and relationship development. However, with a mixed group of talent, the variance in skill level moderated the interaction process, which led to unique status and impacted the interactions among participants. The impact of skill is discussed as the final Optimal Condition for intergroup interaction.

In a supportive environment, intergroup contact is more likely to be accepted and engender positive effects. In the lunchtime basketball group, the support was manifested in the setting characteristics of consistent play, convenience, and open access to the games.

Participants described that they enjoyed the consistent play frequency as the group met three times a week unless it was raining. A former member of the group designed an online sign-up system so the group members can easily access the information about the number of players who intended to play that day or if the basketball activity was cancelled due to weather conditions. As Jeff said:

I like that it [the lunchtime basketball] is consistent with how often we come out here. I like how it is a weekly thing. It is not once a month or something like that. If I have a bad game one day, I know I have another day. Two days later, I can come out here and redeem myself. But I enjoy the consistency here.

Greg also added, "What I like is it seems to be pretty consistent. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday there's seems to be a game unless it's raining." Thus, consistency was the first characteristic of the basketball group.

In addition to consistency, participants considered playing basketball during their lunchtime to be convenient because most participants had family obligations after work. According to Wilson, lunch break is the best time of the day for him to play basketball. He is willing to sacrifice going out for lunch to play basketball at noon. In fact, three participants, Kevin, Tony, and Wade, expressed similar opinions about the convenience of playing basketball during their lunch breaks. For example, Wade worked remotely but always came to the corporate campus for meetings and lunchtime basketball. Tony also said, "People got work, got family to take care of, so lunch time was probably the only time they could squeeze out to do something they like to do." Thus, playing basketball

during lunch time was convenient for participants as they have family commitments after work.

Another characteristic was that the lunchtime basketball was open to all employees of the company. All employees were welcome to join and sometimes employees brought their friends as guests to play. Thus, players with varied levels of skill were welcome to join the group. Additionally, the group did not require a membership or fees, and players were not committed to this group for regular attendance. As Wilson described, “people come and go,” which resulted in changing competition levels depending on who showed up to play. The teammates were different each time because the formation of teams depended on the arrival time of players. Wilson further explained:

I think it [the competition level] can be better because there are people out there who did not play organized basketball. You can tell...they still come out. It is a way of getting some exercise... it is not the best scenario [for competition]. This is a company's facility. We cannot come out and say: No, you cannot play. So we just make best of it and get by.

As a result, in order to maintain the competition level of the game, the group always tried to match players' skillset for the first game; then, the next team was people who were waiting. Wilson explained the process and idea behind this policy:

We pair up the players in term of skillset. Then, we do rock, scissor, and paper. Winners are on one team, and losers are on the other. At least, they are close to ability so we can have more competitive games.

Thus, the lunchtime group managed to overcome the variation of skill level and prevented lopsided games.

This lunchtime basketball group uses an outdoor basketball court surrounded by office buildings at the corporate campus. Research participants revealed the advantages of playing informal basketball at a nearby court during lunch breaks. Greg thought that the lunchtime basketball helps him to relax in the middle of the day. The lunchtime



basketball also provided a brief escape, an activity to look forward to, or something different to do. Greg said:

I think for me it helps relax me to play basketball: Do something other than just work straight eight or nine hours in a day. One thing I appreciate in playing is it helps recharge me if I am playing sports, working out, or just taking my mind slightly off from that just a little while recharging and being more productive.

Tony agreed with Greg and added that he looks forward to basketball every day. The lunchtime basketball is good exercise for him after sitting in his cube for the whole morning. Furthermore, playing basketball during lunch breaks refreshes his head before he goes back to work in the afternoon. Nick added, "Playing basketball is also a mental relief from working here: Getting the basketball aggression, pushing, and shoving and all the fun there. It is a mental release." Thus, with the convenience of time and location, the lunchtime basketball could attract employees to play basketball at the corporate campus at noon.

Playing at the corporate facility during the lunch break was convenient. However, participants revealed the disadvantages of playing informal basketball at the corporate campus. Kevin identified that playing basketball in a work environment limits the severity of the argument on the court, which was not prevalent in general informal basketball. He further proposed that the lunchtime basketball is in an in-between format of formal and informal basketball because people could not really argue passionately in a work environment. In addition, players could lose their job if they were involved in a fight. Nick sensed the restrictions of playing basketball at the corporate facility during the lunch break. He explained:

I don't want to get in a fight because you may potentially lose your job here. But there have been times that I don't want people walk between buildings and see everybody arguing and they would shut us down. I don't want to be associated with that.

Thus, the lunchtime basketball was hosted in a work environment, which served as a mental relief for players in the middle of day. Conversely, players tried to avoid being associated with negative conduct, such as arguing and fighting on the basketball court, in a work environment. With the optimal conditions discussed in the first theme, players gathered to participate in basketball at the work place. However, the variance in skill level and personalities comprised the unequal status, which impacted the interactions among participants. The skill level and its influence on players' status in the group are discussed.

### ***Skill Level***

While Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954) proposed equal status as an optimal condition for achieving interaction/integration, Skill Level, rather than equal status emerged from the data. That is, greater skill level resulted in a greater likelihood for positive interactions. The specific skill level of each volleyball player strongly impacted his or her social status and consequent social opportunities in the informal volleyball setting. Participants indicated that skilled players were more likely to have conversation opportunities at the gym and to build relationships with other players. For example, when players collaborated well on the court, the success of playing volleyball together became the topic of conversation and made them want to play together in the future. Thomas said:

It is really easy to communicate and build relationships with other players if you play volleyball well in informal settings. It is very obvious. I think in all kinds of occasions and scenarios, if you are professional and excellent, people will come to you naturally. That's the reality. I don't intend to make new friends but playing volleyball. But, if I play well together, they will approach me and invited me to play together in the future. So it is the reality in informal volleyball that people with good skills are more likely to know more people and make friends.

This quote is just one indication that skilled players garnered more social opportunities and obtained good status in this setting.

In addition, according to research participants, newcomers with high skills received a greater welcome in informal volleyball than lower-skilled players. As Randy described:

All people care is “can you play?” Sometimes you can play and/or you’re fun to play with. Then that’s all that matters. Which is actually, a very good thing because it’s like you almost at that point don’t think about races or age or anything; there’s no prejudice of any sort, the only prejudice is whether can you play or not.

Further, newcomers are expected to possess at least a certain level of skill; otherwise, participants thought the games were less enjoyable because players could not organize set-up plays. Eric stated:

There is some responsibility I think on that person like when you show up, you are not good...you have to take responsibility for that because we're there to play volleyball, right? And people have to own their own sort of level. From being honest, there is a part of me that’s like...I really want to play today, so if this new person is just not so good, it could be frustrating for me. [A good player joining] That's fine because it brings the whole group up, so that group can play at a higher level, there are more possibilities, like you can just do more. You can do more fancy things.

As a result, the preferences of skilled players produced a less favorable environment for lower-skilled players. Participants who have good skills expressed their struggles regarding playing with lower-skilled players even though they were aware of the open access of informal volleyball.

Conversely, lower-skilled players also sensed the pressure to perform well on the court. Catherine and Sam both mentioned that players would get “the look” from teammates if they did not perform to the expected standard on the court. Catherine said, “There is more pressure playing there. I am afraid that if I don't play well, I would get the look from my teammates.” Mina, who moved to the town several months ago, observed the different treatment between skilled players and lower-skilled players. She described it

this way, “Once they know that I can play, they’ll ask me to play with them. But then, you see there are some people that they’re not going to include.” Thus, Skill Level was found to be an Optimal Condition as greater skilled players obtained more social opportunities on and off the court. Conversely, lower-skilled players were not favored in the setting because of their skill level and this seemed to hinder the likelihood that they would interact with other players.

### **Moderating Factors**

In addition to Allport’s (1954) prerequisite conditions of intergroup contact (i.e., Optimal Conditions), factors that mediate the contact and interaction were also identified (Dovidio et al., 2003). Several potential mediators were proposed to promote the intergroup interaction, and they are Functional Relations, Behavioral Factors, Affective Factors, and Cognitive Factors (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Turner et al., 1987). In fact, these authors suggest that mediating factors are often context specific and must be explored in each particular context.

In this study, several factors emerged from the data—some were found to facilitate interactions, and some were found to hinder interactions and discourage people from further contact in certain conditions. Consequently, these factors acted as moderators rather than mediators in informal sport settings. These moderating factors influenced the likelihood that intergroup contact happened and impacted the strength of contact effects on relationship building as well. Responses from research participants regarding the factors that impacted the interaction in the informal volleyball and basketball settings are described below.

### ***Functional Relations***

Positive interdependence can generate favorable attitudes for intergroup contact (Dovidio et al., 2003). For example, cooperation is a positive interdependence that achieving success together can create and reinforce the sense of achievement and positive association with out-group members. On the contrary, competition between groups can be a negative interdependence that generates unfavorable attitudes. In the interview data, research participants revealed the efforts they made to follow the ground rules and foster a comfortable environment in the informal volleyball setting. Thus, this comprised the functional relations in informal volleyball, which were often described as an adjustment and flexibility to the norms and culture of this setting.

With the open access to the informal volleyball and minimum commitment required, regular players who consistently participated in the games gradually shaped the distinctive culture and norms (unwritten rules) in the informal volleyball facility. Newcomers made adjustments and became flexible in order to follow the latent ground rules made by regular players. Thomas said, “I think every court has its own culture. Players have to learn about it and adjust to it if they want to play there.” Participants also said that if they chose to stay at this gym, they strived to improve their volleyball skills in order to keep up with the level of play. Jami explained it as:

I try to stay in the sport (volleyball) as long as possible. First thing I do, I try to improve myself to be an advanced player. So I can play with the better players. I try to stay in touch with the better players, not just at the court, but also outside the court. I hope to become friends with them, know where they are going next so I can join them.

Thus, Jami improved her skills and was proactive in socializing with skilled players in order to play with them more.

Furthermore, participants described their adjustments regarding how they play and whom they play with. Mina thought that it was important to be flexible and adjust to

teammates' playing levels. Sometimes, players might have to play the role in a match that they did not really want to. As she explained:

If it's a rec sport, you don't have to be... You'd be competitive but if you're learning to play, I don't mind playing with you. But if you... It varies. That's why for me... I can adjust. Taking it very, very seriously versus not taking it very seriously, but at the same time, having fun...sometimes, like they expect the women to just "Can you set the ball?" Why don't you set the ball? Yeah. You just sometimes have to adjust. To me, I always think that the only way you're going to grow or be a better player, this is just for me, is that you have to play with all different kinds of people because that's just how you practice. This is how you adjust.

Thus, players adjusted their roles to cooperate with their teammates to obtain positive playing experiences.

As for adjustments regarding with whom they play, participants found ways to avoid irritating players when signing up for a team. After playing at a gym for a few times, players were aware of each player's skill and sportsmanship level and avoided being on the same team with irritating or bossy players. Sam expressed his intention to avoid those players. He said, "I try but I don't go too far out of my way. I am very civil so I would play with them on the same team. If I can't help, I try to avoid it." Jeremy described his experiences of avoiding demanding players:

I would avoid that player when I sign up for the team. Sometimes you can notice that nobody wants to sign up for a particular team as long as the bossy player is on the team. People would do that, avoid being on the same team with the bossy player. Regulars all know the skill level of other players and who gets bad attitudes or being bossy, etc. So it is obvious that who are not popular and people do not want to play with them.

Thus, participants made adjustments in order to stay at the gym and fit in to the culture and norms. They improved their skill to be competitive, adjusted play level to have fun with teammates, and avoided irritating players.

In the lunchtime basketball group, research participants thought that informal basketball players should be flexible and learn the culture of the basketball group they wanted to join. The culture of the basketball included the playing style, skill level, definition of fouls, and intensity of the game. The culture is also the unwritten rules of the lunchtime basketball group.

Participants who had played basketball in different regions of the country or in different countries noticed the variance of playing styles. Tony actively participated in basketball in his home country and in the U.S. He described his experiences of discovering the different styles of play:

It was a culture shock for me, as the playing style is really different. I struggled to pick up the game when I first got here. How I see the game is entirely different from how other people see the game due to different playing styles. The physicality of the game was different, too.

In the U S., Greg found that basketball rules were interpreted in different ways. He explained, “Depending on what region the country you play, they have these different rules to what is good and what is not good and sometimes they can get a little bit annoying.” Thus, players were expected to adjust to the rules and cultures of the basketball group they wanted to join.

Furthermore, informal basketball players should be able to adjust their roles in a team to make the most contributions. As Jeff explained, “The mindset just changes. It gives you an idea of either how much harder you need to play versus what else you can do on the team.” Since players had different understandings and concepts about basketball, informal players had to make adjustments in order to integrate in the culture of the selected court. Wade expressed the same mindset as Jeff; that he was willing to adjust his game to fit the style and intensity of the group. He said:

It doesn't matter to me. If they are intense, you know I could play like that. If they play relaxed, I could play relaxed as well so it's fine with me. According to my experience [in informal basketball], as a player, I need to adapt to people. If people cannot adapt that well to different styles, they will have problems.

Consequently, making adjustments to adapt to the distinctive rules and cultures of the basketball group and the intensity of the game enabled players to fit in to the group and be accepted by players in the group.

### ***Behavioral Factors***

As Pettigrew (1998) noted, positive intergroup contact can modify people's behavior. In this study, participants established favorable intergroup interactions to facilitate the development of new cultures and norms and create intergroup acceptance, which generalized these effects to other out-group members. Thus, in addition to functional relations and adjusting to existing norms, participants utilized behavioral factors, which were comprised of proactive interactions to form new cultures and norms in the volleyball setting.

Being proactive is one way to form new norms when participants did not have the opportunities to interact with other players or did not feel welcome. Eric suggested that new participants should initiate the interaction rather than waiting for people to show to them that they are welcome. He said:

Because if you don't feel like the other person is extending a hand to invite you in, then you don't knock on the door or you don't say hello first because you just don't feel welcome. So, it's both, you know. You have to engage a little bit, hopefully, they also let you in.

Thomas provided his experiences of proactively initiating interactions for social opportunities. He said:

I feel that if I interact with other people proactively, they are more likely to say hi or talk to me. I see some people prefer not to interact with others and sit by



themselves. If those people don't play volleyball well, it is unlikely that other players will talk to you. They probably don't know what to say to you at all.

Thus, favorable intergroup contact and interaction can be created by proactively exchanging greetings to induce acceptance. Extending friendliness to outgroup members rather than waiting to be accepted was critical to promote intergroup relationships.

Positive intergroup interaction could facilitate the creation of new cultures or norms. In informal basketball a number of specific behaviors positively or negatively impacted the quality of the interactions among players. One of the most prominent behaviors in this setting was players' calling their own fouls.

Behaviors surrounding this policy generated reoccurring disagreement and argument at the court. Wilson described the conflicts on the court, he said:

There are conflicts. Certain players who have been out there have some disagreements, come to face to face argue back and forth more than once. In term of the foul call, that's always the biggest issue. It is a very subjective thing even with the referee in a real game, it is inconsistent among them. Now you take it down to a level where there is no referee, we have players calling fouls. There is always disagreement.

In addition, it appeared that players had different understandings of the game, definitions of what foul is and what is not, and each court might have its own definitions about fouls.

Nick added:

It is amazing some people don't even know what the rules are, but they will call fouls. But it is a part of the game. It is just one of those funny things that people call fouls all the time. It is a point of contention, people argue about it.

Thus, arguments about fouls were common in all levels of basketball games, which constantly disrupted the flow of the game. Jeff recognized the issue of foul calling and tried to find ways to deal with this problem:

We always talk about it [foul calling]. But you have people from different backgrounds, and sometimes people will call certain things based on where we are in the game. We talked about it but I do not think it is a consistent thing we

will ever be on the same page about just because you got people from all kinds of different backgrounds and different places they have grown up learning the game of basketball. That is just how people play.

As a result, foul calling was the main reason that negative responses and interaction happened in the lunchtime basketball group, which negatively impacted the relationships among players.

Some participants revealed their philosophy regarding the foul calls and intended to modify the behaviors of other players. Tony believed that if he called fewer fouls, his opponents would do the same as behavior modification which helped the flow of the game. Ted thought that if there was a touchy foul which did not affect his shot and possession of the ball, he preferred not to call the foul. He said:

If it did not affect my shot or if it did not disrupt the game, [I do not call the foul]. Because every time you call a foul, it slows the game down, you have to reset it. So if there are no adverse effects from it, then you just do not call and keep playing and there are a few players who never call a foul. Even if they get seriously hacked, they just keep playing. That is their philosophy.

Thus, constant foul calling not only disrupted the flow of the game but also created negative interactions among players. Players tried to call fewer fouls to modify other players' behaviors in order to reduce the arguments on the court. This development of new norms of interactions could reduce the common conflicts and arguments in informal basketball and create positive interaction experiences.

### ***Affective Factors***

Emotion has been identified as a critical mediating factor of intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Increasing positive affective connections and reducing negative affective reactions facilitate intergroup contact and mitigate the intergroup bias (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Affective factors emerged primarily in the forms of either anxiety or empathy, as both stress from intergroup interaction and the

ability to understand in-group and out-group members' feelings were expressed by participants.

Lower-skilled players felt the pressure to perform to the expected standard on the court; otherwise, their less tolerant teammates would demonstrate their dissatisfaction through giving "the look" or "teaching" the correct way to play. In addition to pressure, participants described other negative affections such as nervousness and anxiety in intergroup contact. Catherine felt nervous when she was the only Taiwanese player on the team. She said, "I feel very nervous when I am the only Taiwanese in that team. I can't relax and play." This feeling of anxiety made her join her ethnic friends' team when she signed up for a new team. Further, Thomas expressed the challenge he faced when attending social activities with nonimmigrants (Caucasians) off the court. Language and culture barriers were the obstacles for him to truly relax and enjoy the social events. He explained:

I used to dine with my volleyball friends after the game. They spoke English really fast which left me no time to compose my responses. Even though I understood what they were talking about, I found it difficult to hang out with them. So I think as a good player, I earned their trust on the court and got the opportunities to hang out with them off court. But, I stopped going out with them. They still invited me to hang out with them, but I felt the pressure to come up with something to say. It was not as relaxing as I hoped. The only topic I could discuss was probably sports. If they were talking about life experiences, it's difficult to join the conversation since all my life experiences were not from the U. S. It was pretty bad then.

Alex believed that people were more comfortable with interacting with "their own race" although there might be exceptions. He thought that languages and cultures were reasons for this preference. He said, "It's a matter of comfort zone and who we are comfortable with, but that makes a big difference." Thus, the barriers led to negative emotions which

mitigated the interaction effects when the relationships extended off the court, especially when the interactions were not related to sports.

Participants revealed the high tendency to interact with immigrants regardless of their ethnicity. The shared experiences, empathy, and understanding of being newcomers in the U.S. brought immigrants closer to each other. Although the language barrier still existed, immigrants felt less pressure to talk when they both spoke little English. Thomas described his interaction experiences with a Mexican player in the gym:

He is an excellent volleyball player, but he speaks little English. I think maybe we are both immigrants and we share the same feelings of being new to this country. So we have more interaction and play volleyball together.

Catherine felt less pressure talking with players who spoke English as their second language. She described this as “A lot of volleyball players come from central and south America, they don't speak English that well, not a native speaker. I would feel that they are the same as I am or they would not care about my English.” Jami also had pleasant experiences interacting with immigrants from all over the world. She said:

We have one guy from Vietnam and a couple from the Philippines. Even though we're all from the Asia, I didn't know much about Vietnam and the Philippines. We would chat about our home country and the life in the U.S.

Thus, empathy could lead people to feel positively about others and consequently act supportively. Out-group members who shared similar backgrounds and life experiences were likely to feel empathy and motivated to support each other.

In the lunchtime basketball group, respect was comprised of affective factors. Respect represented an admiration for players because of their basketball skills or personalities.

In this group, a few players received more respect from the group members while some of them felt frustrated because they were not treated the same. According to

participants, they thought the skill level and the credibility of calling fouls were important factors of earning respect on the court. Ted explained that skilled players received more respect and a higher status in the group when they made foul calls even though “respect every call” was the policy for this group. He said, “I think the higher your skill level the more respect you get and the more calls you’re going to get that go your way or the more leeway you’re going to get.” Specifically, participants identified two players, as “kings of the court,” who received more obvious respect than other players. These two players were seasoned on the court and possessed better skillsets. Thus, when they called fouls, people tended to accept their judgment without arguing.

Conversely, lower-skilled players received less respect compared to skilled players. When they made a call, everybody argued. Nick described this condition on the court:

If he [a lowered skilled player] calls a foul, he feels that he's got heavily defended and people don't respect his calls. There have been times that people just keep on playing and ignore him. That's because they view him as not so skilled and conversely there is a very good player, he calls a foul sometimes he doesn't even call the foul, he just stops moving and everybody just assume he calls the foul because his skill set is higher and people just "if he calls a foul, it's got to be a foul because he is so good at basketball.

In addition, Kevin also questions the prevalent situation that skilled players got things to go their way. He explained, “You have to respect every call. It doesn’t matter how stupid it is because what it comes with is some people get the call and some don’t. Then, my words are better than yours. And that is discrimination.” Thus, the different treatment led lowered skilled players and low credibility players to argue their calls and created a vicious cycle that the more they argued, the lesser respect they received.

Consequently, some participants indicated that credibility and fairness were critical to earning respect, and they were critical to the latent ground rules of the

lunchtime basketball group. Wilson thought, “It [respect] is more had to do with the way you play on the court and how you don't have conflicts with others.” Furthermore, players who received more respect tended to argue less on the court and gave respect to others. One of the players who had more arguments on the court had been labelled as low credibility in terms of foul calling. Tony thought that a track record in informal sport was important. If people identified a player who made bad calls all the time, it was more likely that people argued when that player called fouls. He further explained:

He calls foul a lot of times, and people do not necessarily agree with it. It got worse when he doesn't respect other peoples call, too. It is a combination of not respecting other peoples' call and expecting other people to respect his every single call.

Thus, skill level and credibility of calling fouls were important for earning respect and social status in the lunchtime basketball group. While skill level led to unequal status, track record and credibility regarding foul calling also served as criteria for receiving respect in the group.

### ***Cognitive Factors***

Cognitive factors impact people's behavior and their behavioral responses to all kinds of external stimuli they receive (Roy, 2013). Stereotypes and pre-established attitudes can inhibit the intergroup contact and create negative contact effects. In addition, to change the stereotypes and bias requires knowledge replacement and identity categorization (Pettigrew, 1998).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and Self-categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) proposed the pivotal role of both individual and collective identities in the development of intergroup preference and bias, which led to different affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions toward others. It is expected that after extended

contact, re-categorization became possible so people perceived that they were all in a big group (Pettigrew, 1998).

Small groups were formed based on reasons such as they wanted to play volleyball with their friends, they were not comfortable to play with strangers, and they wanted to practice as a team in order to improve their performance in league and tournament matches. As Mina described, “There are some people who just go there and have their own crowd because they want to practice or whatever.” In fact, each gym with a distinctive culture was a small group in the local volleyball community. A common situation was that newcomers, out-group members of a gym, usually left the court right after the game because they did not know what to chat about and whom to chat with. After socializing and being accepted by other players, the newcomers started to behave as in-group members and felt comfortable in the gym. In addition, skill level could be a criterion for small groups. The open gym observed by the researcher could be seen as a small group where players perceived it as a highly competitive informal volleyball group compared to other casual open gyms in town. Thus, players in the competitive gym expected new players to possess certain levels of skillsets to maintain the competitive standard. Conversely, the lower-skilled players got “the look” from some of their teammates and made little connection with other players on the court and had few opportunities for small talk after the game. Consequently, the gym became exclusive for more skilled player and, gradually, the less skilled players had fewer chances to become an in-group member of that gym.

In conclusion, in an effort to answer research question two, two themes, Optimal Conditions and Moderating Factors, emerged to encompass factors that influenced the interaction in informal sport and participants’ relationship building in sport settings. Particularly, the skill level of the Optimal Conditions and proactivity, empathy, openness,

and social identity of the Moderating Factors were evident to influence the interaction in informal sport. The impacts of these moderating factors are discussed in chapter five.

### **IMPACT ON IMMIGRANTS' INTERACTION AND INTEGRATION**

In order to answer research question three, "Does inter-ethnic interaction in informal sport impact immigrants' social relationships and their integration to the new country? If so, how?" three themes emerged from the data: Learning New Knowledge and Cultures, Ethnic In-group Identity, and Impact to Life.

#### **Learning New Knowledge and Cultures**

Learning new knowledge regarding the out-group was one of the cognitive factors that facilitated intergroup contact. Learning about the out-group could unconfirm previous bias, increase cultural sensitivity, reduce uncertainty about how to interact, and see out-group members as individuals for personalized relationship building (Pettigrew, 1998). Thus, learning about out-groups, as the one of the intergroup interaction facilitators can improve attitudes toward out groups and reduce stereotypes (Kawakami et al, 2000). In the informal volleyball group, research participants described what they learned and the learning experiences.

Through playing informal volleyball and interacting with people with various backgrounds, research participants learned not only how volleyball was played in different areas of the world, but also cultures of the U.S. and other countries. Eric found it interesting to see how internationals demonstrated different strategies to play volleyball. He said:

It's interesting, and as far as volleyball goes, there's a lot to be learned from how people play the game in other parts of the world. Because it's certainly not played the way they teach it in Europe, is not the way we play here in the U. S. and I don't know exactly if there's an Asian influence but the thing is Japan invented the six-two defense. That's things like that you find and I like it.



Thus, intergroup contact could facilitate the exchange of volleyball knowledge.

In addition, research participants specifically noted that interactions with ethnic majorities helped them to learn mainstream lifestyles. Being in the informal sport environment also gave them opportunities to become familiar with social norms and current issues of society. As Jami described:

In this country, I realized one thing, family is very important to people, so kids are always one of the major subjects for strangers to start a conversation. The gym also hosts a lot of activities for young kids.

Jeremy did not pay attention to public affairs both before and after his immigration to the U.S. However, informal sport became one of the contexts in which he learned about public issues and discussed those issues with others. He said:

I think I get to know a little bit about it [current issues] through sports. When I talk to Americans, I would know their lifestyle, what they care about. I think in general, Americans pay attention to politics, health care reform, finance and economic issues, which are relevant to their daily life.

Alex liked that his interactions with Americans' interactions were "easygoing" when he played volleyball with them. He explained:

When there are arguments or unpleasant things, they would be solved quickly. The good thing is that people don't hold grudge toward others. Even some people are not happy, it would go away in two or three days, and they would come back to play. I really like this part of the American culture, they're pretty easygoing, and they don't take problems too seriously. I think it is the way they've been raised and the way the society has taught them that if you see a problem, rather than attacking each other, they look for solutions, rather than getting upset.

Thus, the easygoing and problem solving orientations were what Alex learned from playing informal volleyball with out-group members.

For learning about other cultures in the world, Catherine found informal volleyball to be a good opportunity to observe people with different backgrounds and their reactions toward the same things, especially among volleyball players from Central

and South America. Sam and Thomas also learned about Indians' socializing culture through interacting with them in informal sport. Sam noted:

Indians tend to have their own network or small groups. [Indians and Pakistanis] they literally are very exclusive like isolated themselves. Not just because language barriers and cultural differences, but they just prefer that for some reason.

Thus, research participants thought that making new friends and learning different cultures through volleyball was interesting and beneficial. Andy summarized it well, "You can get to know what they think about those issues and why they would think that way. Not just making new American friends, but also people from many countries." Thus, learning new information through informal volleyball was helpful for players to understand out-group members, especially for immigrants to learn about new cultures and understand how things work in their new country.

In the lunchtime basketball group, with little off-court interaction, the lunchtime basketball players interacted at the court and learned about basketball cultures from different regions of the country and all over the world. Wade noticed that there was more trash talk on the court in the U.S. compared to his experiences in the Philippines, he said:

I would say there's more trash talking here [the U. S.]. I think it's in the U.S. street ball culture, you know, more trash talking. But I think for me, I'm fine with that. Because it's all part of the game.

Another immigrant, Kevin, noticed that the concept of street ball was prevalent in the U.S. as he experienced similar street ball playing styles in the lunchtime basketball group, in the local college gym, and in other sport facilities.

In addition to learning a new basketball culture, Nick expressed his interests in other aspects of different cultures. He said, "I really have always been just interested in different cultures in general, food, customs, and things like that. It is a good thing for

your work, too.” Thus, he took the opportunities to interact with players from other cultures (immigrants) to learn about the foreign cultures.

In conclusion, immigrants learned about the sport culture, social norms, mainstream culture, and current issues in society of their new host country through interacting with other participants on and off the courts. In addition to learning about American culture, immigrants also learned new knowledge and cultures from other immigrants in informal sport. Similar effects were found in the self-defined non-immigrants. They learned the way sports are played in other countries and learned the social norms and customs from immigrants in the off-court social activities.

### **Ethnic In-group Identity**

The interview data showed that participants had more interactions with people who shared the same ethnic background because of familiarity and a common first language. As a result, several Mexicans and Taiwanese formed their respective small groups in the volleyball setting. According to participants, communicating in a second or third language required extra effort. Consequently, they preferred to relax and enjoy the volleyball instead of striving to chat with acquaintances in their second languages. Catherine explained, “We share the common background from the same country and speak the same language. It is easier to communicate and know them in that way.” Consequently, it was typical for the same ethnic immigrants to form small groups and play together on the court.

Some immigrants extended this relationship off the court and organized social activities. Francis said, “We play together because we get along and we know how to communicate with each other. It is easier to use our first languages.” Thus, small ethnic groups usually signed up to play as a team and interacted with their group members in the

seating area. In addition to the convenience of communicating in their first languages, small groups provide a comforting sense of being with their friends and the familiarity.

Catherine stated:

I feel comfortable while team up with Taiwanese. We have been playing together for a while so we know the move of each other. When I team up with less familiar people, they probably don't know my game and whether I can receive that ball, so we might have miscommunication.

Further, the tolerance level within the ethnic groups was high, and lower-skilled players could play without pressure because skilled teammates covered most of the court.

However, Alex talked about immigrants' struggles with staying in the comfort zone. He said:

I would like to stay in my own comfort zone, like most people. I can't say it's wrong but you have to be able to adjust yourself with other cultures. But I don't think it's easy to make so many adjustments. I think one of the reasons that most people do it is because it's not easy to make so many adjustments. You have one brain, how many adjustments can one brain make.

Alex expressed the shared concern of many immigrants that making adjustment was not easy and required determination.

While immigrants sat comfortably in their small ethnic groups, both in-group and out-group members noticed the exclusivity and possible consequences. As Thomas described his ethnic group:

The small group always goes to the gym together and not really interacts with others. Having the small group keeps other people away from talking to us or making connection with us.

Mina was an immigrant but expressed her opinion regarding the exclusivity of small groups and its contradiction to the open concept of informal sport. She said:

There are some people just want to play in a team. But, it's open volleyball. You're supposed to play with other people. Sometimes they don't have that respect. I consider it as a challenge. If you play with the same people over and

over again, yes, you match with them and you have that chemistry but are you really going to grow if they're going to set you in the same place or something.

Thus, the open concept of informal sport should be honored and ethnic cliques prevented so that people played with new players and challenged themselves.

Conversely, nonimmigrants revealed that the exclusivity of small groups discouraged other players from interacting with them. As Sam explained:

I am less likely to talk to them as a group. I can understand wanting to play with friends but I also don't really like that exclusivity. I think you kind of go to play and meet with other players. It is a good experience to make you a better player, so I find it kind of off-putting.

Eric expressed his concern for people staying in the small group. He said:

It's very comfortable. But what happens is you get insular and you get very safe and you stop learning. You stop seeing everything that's beyond you. Also, I think it's good manners to be inclusive. It's hard, though. And I guess I have a little bit of a rebellious nature and I just want to break that and just stretch a little bit and don't sit at your table, sit at someone else's table.

Furthermore, small ethnic groups could be so exclusive in their playing formation and preference that other immigrants from the same ethnic background found it difficult to join. As Jami said:

I try not to be in that team when they need people because of the setter. He always has his agenda to train this person or that person in the team. I will be the extra for them. They always kept their formation. I think for some other groups, when they have their own formation, they would let me do something as a sub.

Thus, even if Jami came from the same cultural background, she might not necessarily fit in with the exclusive small group.

The social identity based on ethnic backgrounds mitigated intergroup contact because the clique was strong and comfortable to the immigrants. Skilled immigrants might obtain social opportunities with out-group members when they occasionally signed

up for random teams. However, the less skilled immigrants would only stay on the ethnic team where it was comfortable and less stressful.

Furthermore, in the lunchtime basketball group, participants who are immigrants discussed their diversity experiences and being ethnic out-group members. They perceived that ethnicity mattered in some situations and, therefore, provided explanations about it.

Tony had played informal basketball when he was in college and played with the lunchtime basketball group at his company. He thought that his interaction experience with diverse populations was enjoyable. Thus, he maintained a good relationship with his basketball acquaintances from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. However, Tony added, “I am not sure if they are well represented of the big picture” because all of the basketball players he met in college and in his current corporation were well-educated or had a satisfying life. As a result, informal basketball held at the campus and in a work environment could be friendlier for out-group members than general informal basketball. Further, “ethnic difference” had varied meanings for immigrants in different age groups. Wilson lived in the U.S. for more than thirty years, and was an experienced informal basketball player. He thought that ethnicity had an impact on his basketball participation when he was younger as he mostly played with his Vietnamese friends or joined a Vietnamese basketball league. However, the influence of ethnicity lessened with age since he realized it was impossible to stay in his ethnic group. He said, “Ethnicity plays a role when people are younger, but as people get older, I do not think it matters.” Thus, from Wilson’s perspective, ethnicity was not an issue in the lunchtime basketball group because the members were an older group. In addition, he did not think ethnicity differences triggered conflicts on the court but were a result of players’ personalities and characters which contributed to the differentiation of in-group and out-group members.

Thus, the boundary of ethnicity for Wilson was blurred as he re-categorized with different groups as he aged.

However, Kevin, an immigrant who lived in the U.S. for twenty years, felt the tension between ethnic groups when playing informal basketball. He said:

I think it [ethnicity] does make a difference. For all these years I have played, I have felt the tension. I think one perception is that the U. S. has been known for being good at basketball so they think someone from a foreign country cannot play.

With a strong ethnicity in-group identity at the court, Kevin seldom de-categorized or re-categorized his out-group mindset. Thus, the intergroup contact effects would be mitigated.

In conclusion, ethnic groups provided a comfort zone for immigrants in informal volleyball settings which reinforced their in-group identity through group activities and emotional support. However, the exclusivity of ethnic groups discouraged out-group members from interacting with the members of ethnic groups. Immigrants were aware of the disadvantages of the ethnic groups; however, the struggles of leaving their comfort zone kept them in the ethnic groups. In the basketball setting, fewer immigrants than self-defined non-immigrants played in the group. Thus, the small amount of immigrants presented in the lunchtime group prevented the emergence of ethnic groups. The in-group identity effects became individual and depended on the participant's own life experiences.

### **Impacts on Life**

Research participants played informal sport because of their desire to compete, have fun, exercise, and create social opportunities. Among these benefits, participants emphasized the social opportunities and their consequent impact on their lives.

Participants who are immigrants built their ethnic network through small ethnic groups in informal volleyball, and the relationships indeed facilitated several aspects of immigrants' lives. As Catherine described:

I get to know some Taiwanese and become good friends with them. We eat together quite often and do a lot of activities together. I got to expand my social life through them and know their friends. I think networking or get to know more people is very helpful for people living overseas. If you are in need of help or job hunting information, friends are very important.

In addition to making personal friends with ethnic groups, research participants indicated the challenges they faced and efforts required to build friendships with ethnic majorities.

Thomas explained:

I have initiated something but it depends on if I want to develop that relationship with them. There is a language barrier for me and I have to make efforts to keep the friendships. So it is much easier to hang out with Mandarin speaking friends. It takes effort to hang out with English speaking friends. It could be tiring. But if there are opportunities like this, immigrants should make good use of them. I believe it has been a positive influence on my life. I may start something through playing sports, but I haven't really extended it. I do get to know some Americans but I don't know them that well [to say] I have learned their culture.

Thus, language barriers and cultural differences are the primary obstacles for Thomas.

Jami thought that inter-ethnic interactions required a two-way effort to generate positive impacts in immigrants' lives. She said:

I was invited to a barbecue and all other events by people who live here. It was fun and it's all local people. So I think it (interaction) helps (immigrant's life) and I also like to promote my country. A lot of people, especially when they're from the U.S., they get confused about Taiwan and Thailand. That's annoying. So I make sure that people know where I'm from and that we're not a part of China and all that. So I seek as many opportunities as possible to do the two-way promotion.

She further emphasized that "I think it's beneficial for people like me who's immigrant to know more about the cultural, the society, not just the culture here from the locals also from people from other country that happen to play sports with me."



In the lunchtime basketball group, participants with an immigrant background discussed how basketball impacted their lives. Tony explained that many of his close friends loved to play basketball, and they always socialized over activities about basketball. He said, “I have also met a lot of great people playing basketball together and become friends.”

Further, participants, especially immigrants, indicated that the love of playing basketball motivated them to find informal basketball games when they moved to new places. Tony played informal basketball in his home country and two cities in the U.S. He even found a place to play basketball during his visit to Germany. He said, “No matter where I go, the first thing I’ll do is to look for a place to play basketball.” Similarly, participants who moved domestically shared identical experiences. When they moved to a new city, they found a place for informal basketball games. As Wilson described, “After I graduated, I went away to work. I worked in different states. I would always find a place to play there.”

Wade shared an experience about reaching out to ethnic friends and connecting with local ethnic basketball players when he worked overseas:

I go to Canada during the last quarter of the year. When I go there I ask around, ask some of my friends where I could play, stuff like that. The other group that I played with last year, there in Canada, it came from a friend of mine in the Philippines. My friend in the Philippines has some friends in Canada who play and so I got in touch with them. I played with them. I do not know anyone from there, but I reached out to them and see if I could play and they are a good group of people, so I play with them regularly when I am there.

As a result, basketball became a constant part of these participants’ lives when they worked temporarily in another country or moved to another city or country.

In addition, Wade utilized the opportunities in the lunchtime basketball group to observe and learn ways to interact with people. This learning was helpful for his interaction with people in other non-sport settings. He said:

I think it helps because here I get to see different behaviors of people, right? So when I'm outside, you know, off this group, I could easily adapt to how other people are behaving. Even the small talk, since I hear a lot of how people talk here, I would understand what other people are saying off the court as well. So the diversity helps, and me trying to understand other people as well, outside.

Thus, learning basketball cultures or cultures in general helped out-group members' understanding and facilitated the interaction in the basketball group and in other occasions.

In conclusion, for immigrants in informal volleyball, they built relationships with volleyball acquaintances through playing sport together and gained access to extending their relationships off the court. However, two-ways efforts from non-immigrants and immigrants are necessary for meaningful interactions which may lead to social integration into society. The network built around the in-group members provided support in several aspects which could be useful for some immigrants. In the basketball setting, since the immigrants in this group had established a stable life in the U.S., they utilized sport as a constant that they could enjoy playing and networking around the sport when they travel or relocate to new places.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study explored the interactions that immigrants experienced in informal sport settings, the factors that influenced these interactions, and the impacts of these experiences on immigrants' social integration in society. A conceptual model of social integration in informal sport is presented in Figure 1. The results revealed that the contact and interaction in the informal sport settings were a socializing process for participants. Interest about the sport motivated informal sport participation, but the involvement and continued participation were a process of accepting and learning the culture of the sport groups. Thus, the first section of this chapter discusses participants' interaction to answer research question one, as well as participants' socialization in informal sport settings. This is presented as Pathway 1 in the model.

In addition, moderators played pivotal roles in facilitating or inhibiting the relationship-building process in informal sport settings. These moderators affected the likelihood that immigrants' intergroup contact would happen and the strength of the contact's effects on relationship building. Thus, the second section of this chapter addresses the moderators and the moderating effects in order to answer research question two.

Further, the results showed that the relationship extension from sport acquaintances to off-court personal friends was the catalyst for socialization in the culture of the society. Research question three addressed this integration process of immigrants. Thus, the third section of this chapter discusses extending relationships through social activities of informal sport participants outside of sport settings and immigrants' integration through these off-court social interactions. This is presented as Pathway 2 in the model.

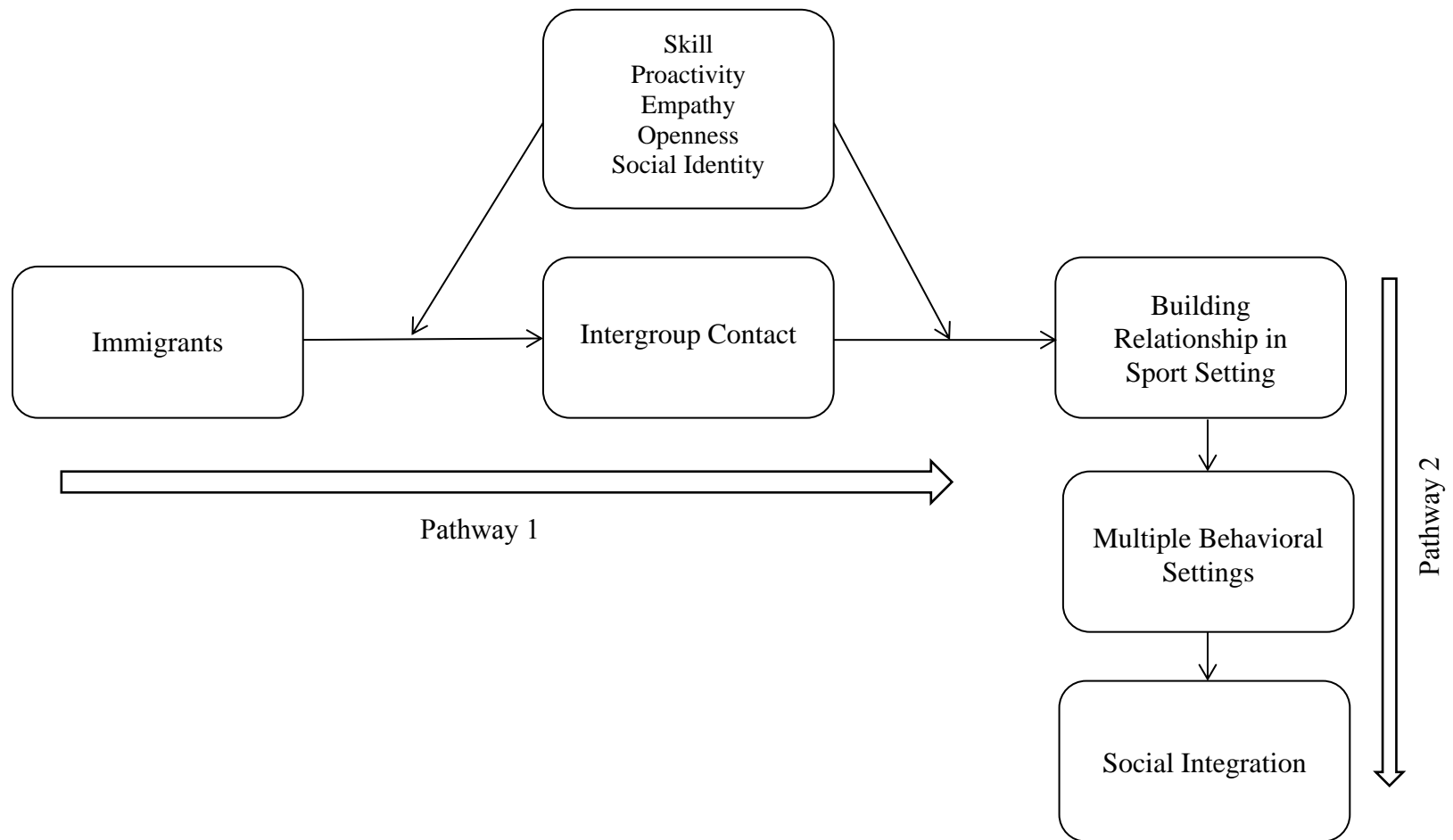


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Social Integration in Informal Sport

Finally, the study revealed the implications for sport management research and practice. Thus, the fourth section of this chapter discusses the social interaction effects in informal sport and the managed interventions of the organized sport programs. The role of sport participation in the social integration of immigrants is discussed as well.

#### **PARTICIPANTS' INTERACTION IN INFORMAL SPORT**

In the current study, informal sport participation created interaction opportunities for participants who shared an interest in sports. The interaction in informal sport settings was generally related to sports. Informal sport participants had frequent interactions during the game because team sports require cooperation and communication. Research question one addressed this interaction. On-court success often drives pleasant discussions after the game, which sets the foundation for future interactions. Thus, the participants talked about their on-court performance, sport techniques, strategies, or sports news in the informal setting.

These contacts and interactions resulted in acquaintances or closer relationships in the sport setting. However, the results revealed that contacts and interactions among participants were not all positive. As discussed in the previous section, a violation of the unwritten rules was the primary cause of negative interactions. For example, informal volleyball participants received nasty looks because they made easy errors on the court.

Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954) served as a guide to systematically explore these interactions among participants in informal sport. Allport (1954) identified four prerequisite conditions for intergroup contact: equal status, common goals, cooperation, and support from authority. Recent studies have added two additional conditions (personal interaction and friendship opportunity) into the mix. These conditions were found to be optimal conditions rather than prerequisite conditions because intergroup contact still happened when these conditions were not present in the setting. Thus, these

optimal conditions provided examples for when the intergroup contact would most likely happen.

### **Optimal Conditions of Intergroup Contact in Informal Sport**

The results revealed that the participants sought healthy team competition, fun, exercise, and social opportunities in informal sport. These desires formed the optimal conditions when intergroup contact happened: healthy team competition relied on cooperation of the whole group, fun and exercise served as the common goals, and personalized relationships were built through social opportunities. Generally, another optimal condition was equal status; however, in the volleyball and basketball settings, differing skill levels created an unequal status among participants. A good level of skill facilitated the intergroup contact, while a low level of skill inhibited intergroup contact.

The preferences of skilled players were consistent with previous studies. In the youth sport literature, physical competence and skill level were found to be relevant for acceptance within peer groups and friendship opportunities (Evans & Roberts, 1987; Smith, 2007). The results of the current study also revealed that skill levels and on-court performance are critical to regular players' first impressions about newcomers in informal sport. These first impressions were associated with the future newcomers' interactions.

According to the results, skill level acted as a moderator for interaction and the relationship-building process from basic interaction to sport acquaintances in informal sport. As moderators influence the strength of a relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986), high skill level strengthened the process; thus, skilled participants were more likely to have interactions and develop acquaintance relationships with other players. Conversely, lower skill levels did not strengthen or even mitigate the process.

The variation of skill levels in informal sport promotes skill preference in competitive informal sport. Participants expressed their desires to play with and against

others who had similar or better skill sets to maintain the fun of the game. However, with informal sport's open access model, all participants with a variety of skill levels can join the games when sports are played. Participants preferred to play with skilled players in order to enhance their playing experience, especially when they pursued competitive games. Consequently, skilled participants were popular because of their experience in competition and understanding of the rules and positioning. In short, they maintained or increased the competition level that the current group of informal players desired.

This skill preference promotes skilled players' social status in the informal sport group and can create unequal status among players. Skilled participants were more likely to hold a high social status in informal sport. These results are consistent with Lee and Scott's (2013) research regarding Korean American males' perspectives on interracial contact in recreational sports. They also found a positive relationship between skill level and social status in the group.

Further, social status was found to be relevant to the occurrence of social interactions in informal sport. In informal volleyball, a high level of sport skills engendered higher social status and more social interactions, which was essential for participants' relationship building. Skilled players received invitations to play sports together in the future and to chat about previous games and sports in general. Although these interactions remained sports-related, they were the foundation for further personalized interactions.

Conversely, lower-skilled participants may not be as welcome if the group has a competitive playing level in informal sport. In the current study, lower-skilled participants encountered unpleasant interactions after making mistakes on the court. Some teammates revealed their frustration and dissatisfaction when errors were made. In addition, the opportunity to chat about on-court success was much slimmer when they lost the game. All of these interaction experiences of participants led to socialization in informal sport.

## **SPORT PARTICIPANTS' SOCIALIZATION AND THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Immigrants in informal sport actually require two forms of socialization: sport socialization and cultural socialization. Sport socialization is a process through which informal sport participants, including immigrants, learn the sport-related culture in an informal setting. Cultural socialization is another process through which informal sport participants learn about themselves and the social worlds of the sport facility. Therefore, when playing sports in an informal setting, immigrants not only learn the sport culture but also the culture of the sport group (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Pathway 1 in the Conceptual Model

The results of this study revealed that unwritten rules existed in informal sport settings, and socialization to the norms of the informal sport group was a necessary process for newcomers. These unwritten rules and norms composed the culture of the sport group. The open-access concepts of informal sport games have been deeply instilled in informal sport participants' minds, but unwritten rules exist to select like-minded participants. As a result, if participants disliked the unwritten rules or refused to socialize to the culture, they would end their participation and find another group to join. Regulars who committed to the informal sport group agreed with the unwritten rules and, thereby, socialized through learning, changing, and reproducing the culture (Coakley, 2007).

### **Socialization to the Culture of Sport Groups**

Socialization to the sport group and its norms and culture are the major factors that impacted participants' retention, especially in the informal sport setting where management and design of the program were minimal. The process of introduction and



involvement does not occur automatically, and the newcomers to the informal sport help the process happen (Stevenson, 1999). Thomas described his search process for an informal volleyball group when he moved to town: he looked up information online and played with several volleyball groups to experience the culture of each one. For example, Thomas found an informal volleyball group where the playing level was too low for his expectations, and another group was too socially oriented for him. Once he found an informal volleyball group with an acceptable culture and rules, he developed a commitment by playing with the group as a regular and adjusting to the culture. As a result, selection is a two-way process: participants select the groups, and the groups also select the participants who have similar skills. The groups may also choose not to select a participant if current group members disagree with his or her behaviors. Then, the groups make adjustments such as avoiding playing with that participant. Although the groups lack the authority to expel members, participants find ways to adjust so they can keep enjoying the sport in their groups. Thus, participating in informal sport is only the beginning, but becoming an in-group member is a result of socialization and mutual acceptance.

The socializing and adjusting process, in addition to voluntary participation, may explain why regular participants in informal sport have few negative contacts. Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) found that the effects of negative intergroup contact are moderated by whether the participant has entered the contact voluntarily. Further, regular participants have experienced this selection process and have had common interests with other members; and most important, they have socialized with the group. Otherwise, they would already have ended their participation with the group. Therefore, it is possible that the first few times in the informal setting are critical to the socialization process when participants make impressions. Therefore, current studies suggest that sport practitioners should consider the socializing process and the contact effects during the first interactions to measure participants' retention.

## **Unwritten Rules of Informal Sport**

The current study revealed two kinds of unwritten rules, soft rules and hard rules. Soft rules are those made by participants that can be modified by current members of the group. In addition, the authority of the informal sport setting creates hard rules that participants cannot change. For example, workplace expectations and the corporate employees' conduct code set the hard rules for the lunchtime basketball group. In the workplace sport setting, players learn and follow both soft rules and hard rules. As a result, more restrictions can be found in a workplace sport group, and further studies regarding both soft and hard rules, especially in a workplace, are needed to understand their impact on the informal players' contact and interaction.

Consequently, informal sport is not truly "open" as participants thought and described. Participants have to socialize and learn the unwritten rules and expectations of skill levels. Compared to organized sport, informal sport is flexible as current participants can gradually modify unwritten rules and expectations.

Informal sport participants' common participation goals contribute to the formation of unwritten rules. In sports, a great part of joy comes from the athletic competition and the thrill of winning (Frederick-Recascino & Schuster-Smith, 2003). Pursuing healthy team competition was embedded in the cultures of both the informal volleyball setting and the lunchtime basketball group. Participants sought fun, exercise, and competition in their informal sport participation. Particularly, fun manifested as a joy for competition. Competition is a major part of sports; thus, it is extremely challenging to construct sports games without competition, or it may not be sports anymore. Participants are also attracted by the competitiveness of the sport activity (Duda, 2007). In these two settings, participants specifically described the desire to engage in good competition. In the lunchtime basketball group, participants tried to make the team even and avoid lopsided games for better team competition. In addition to healthy team competition, fun and exercise were participants' main goals rather than winning.

Participants liked to win, but they also realized that winning was not the most important thing in this setting and their current sport participation. Winning was exciting, but if they lost the game, they would have another opportunity to win in the next game. If participants focused too much on winning, it became a violation of unwritten rules.

In the current study, the culture of the informal volleyball setting is “appropriate seriousness,” which was the regulars’ expectation for the newcomers. A certain level of skill and competitiveness were required in order to perform on the court and contribute to the team. Since many skilled players gathered to play in this particular facility, they constructed a culture of highly competitive volleyball in the gym, which was not advertised at the door.

No specific mechanisms were used to even out the teams, as teams were formed based on the order of sign-up, and participants were expected to possess at least a certain level of skill. In this way, a variety of offensive plays could be used in the game, and players could play defense to rally. This indicated that players desired a certain level of competition that made the game interesting.

In fact, the informal volleyball games were open to participants with all skill levels until participants began the socialization process in the setting and found out that they were not skilled enough to perform at the expected standard in the games. Thus, higher-skilled players and lower-skilled players had different interactions that depended on whether the players could display the appropriate seriousness.

The detailed standards of the seriousness changed based on the regulars since these were soft rules. If more low-skilled participants joined the group and drove skilled players away, they would change the culture and standards of the appropriate seriousness.

In the lunchtime basketball group, the culture was based on respectable foul calling and employees’ code of conduct at the corporate campus. Respectable foul calling was the soft rule that could be changed depending on the regulars’ consensus. However, the unchangeable hard rules were made from the corporation’s culture and common

workplace expectations. Violating the hard rules cost much more in that participants could lose jobs; conversely, violating soft rules would only result in the end of players' participation in the lunchtime basketball group. Consequently, the hard rules were the baseline that players had to follow since their employment would be in jeopardy.

Compliance with the soft rules was related to interaction with group members. Similar to the volleyball setting, the basketball game was open to all employees until participants socialized and discovered that they disagreed with the foul-calling standard and left the group. Although players' arguing about foul calling was common in informal basketball, maintaining credibility and being respectable regarding foul calling were the most significant unwritten rules in the group. Once a player lost his credibility, more arguments happened and players questioned his calls more often. The vicious cycle created more ill feelings as the culture shifted, and calls from discredited players would be constantly challenged. Thus, it is very likely that the less credible player would leave the group due to the hostile environment and the cold treatment.

In the lunchtime basketball group, participants tried to make the team even and avoid lopsided games for better team competition. However, they expressed that winning was less and less important for their sport participation as they grew older. The informal sport became a playful game for fun and some exercise. They were also aware that competitive basketball may not be the best exercise for them at their ages (around late thirties to mid-forties), but they chose to play because the game had the potential to offer more fun than exercise.

### **Impacts of the Sport Group Cultures**

The unwritten rules in the informal sport had three functions and affected informal sport participation. First, they represented an invisible standard for the participant selection, which contradicts concepts of open access. Although the invisible standard still welcomed public participation, these unwritten rules favored participants

who could adjust to the standards and socialize in the culture of the sport group. This process of introduction and involvement inevitably made the participants homogeneous in terms of their skill sets and socializing abilities and created advantages for these participants.

Second, the culture of the sport group explained why the positive and negative interactions happened. The culture demonstrated the goals, likes, and dislikes of the current members of the sport group. A participant's violation of the unwritten rules was likely to cause negative interactions. For example, in the informal volleyball setting, missing an easy reception might result in a nasty look from a teammate. In the lunchtime basketball group, the participants' credibility in foul calling was positively related to the intergroup interaction on the court. Thus, recognizing and understanding the unwritten rules and socializing to the culture could help participants avoid negative interactions.

Third, the culture of the sport group influenced the amount of intergroup contact and interaction participants would have. As skilled participants were preferred in the culture of the volleyball group to demonstrate the appropriate level of seriousness, they obtained higher status in the group and more social opportunities with other participants. The influence was also evident in the lunchtime basketball group. Similar to the volleyball group, good skill sets were valued, but making questionable foul calls caused a loss of credibility, which in turn caused more challenged calls in the future. Thus, participants with the attributes that were favored in the culture of the sport group would have more social opportunities. These social opportunities were facilitators for the development of social relationships.

In conclusion, informal sport participants' socialization to the sport setting includes socialization to the culture of the sport and to the culture of the sport group. Results of this socialization are critical for their involvement and participation. In addition, the culture of the sport group, manifested as the unwritten rules and norms, influenced the interaction among participants. In the current study, since immigrants

socialized with the sport group through contact and interaction with other participants, their interaction experiences and effects were directly associated with the socialization of the sport group.

### **MODERATING FACTORS FOR THE INTERGROUP CONTACT AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

As for how intergroup contact happened, studies have identified several mediating factors that could facilitate or inhibit intergroup contact and interaction. Those mediating factors were categorized as functional relations, behavioral factors, affective factors, and cognitive factors (Dovidio et al., 2003). In the current study, several factors in these categories emerged as moderators for immigrants' intergroup contact and relationship building instead of the mediating factors that literature has suggested. Moderating factors changed the likelihood that immigrants' intergroup contact would happen, as well as changed the strength of the contact effects on relationship building. Based on the results, proactively seeking relationships, empathy, openness to new information, and social identity moderated the intergroup contact. Thus, the second part of this section discusses informal sport participants' interaction experience and moderators that influenced these experiences.

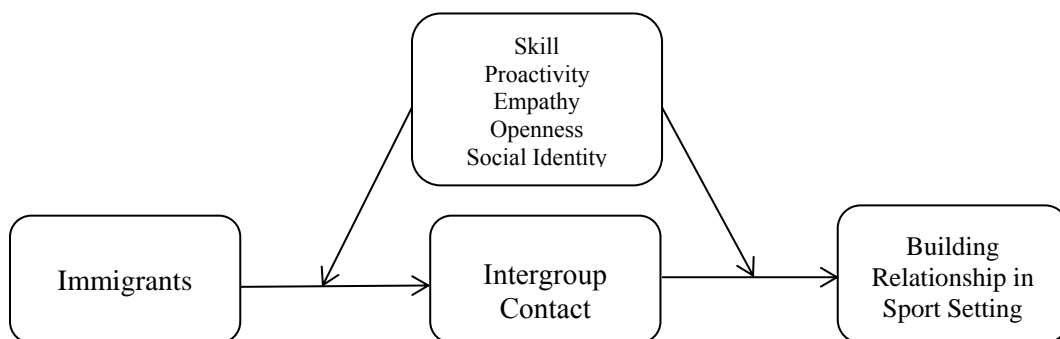


Figure 3: Pathway 1 with Moderators

From the perspective of building relationships on the court as sport acquaintances, two outcomes were evident. First, participants had interactions on the court with a mixed group of players. Second, participants had interactions on the court with players from their own ethnic groups. Thus, proactive players with empathy and open minds, in addition to good skills, were more likely to interact with a mixed group of people. Conversely, low openness led to close relationships with in-group members.

Proactivity and openness were key moderating factors for immigrants to build relationships with participants from other ethnic backgrounds. For example, Thomas proactively greeted other players, regardless of their ethnicity, when he entered the informal volleyball setting. Further, a good level of skill generated social opportunities for players regardless of their ethnicities, and having empathy was critical to in-group interactions for immigrants. A combination of all of these moderating factors can explain the intergroup interaction in informal sport.

### **Social Identity**

One of the moderating factors, social identity, explains the process by which participants decategorize and recategorize group identities in intergroup conditions (Dividio et al., 2003; Miller, 2002). Ideally, at the end of intergroup contact, there are no in-group and out-group separations, and one big group is formed. However, in the current study, ethnic group members shared strong bonds with in-group members. Several groups had very distinctive in-group identities and stayed as a subgroup as often as possible.

In-group members reinforced their relationships through playing, chatting, and sitting together at the court. As the group members had tight relationships, out-group members were less likely to interact with them. From an intergroup contact perspective, exclusive ethnic groups reduced interactions with out-group members. They also revealed a message that the group was not seeking interactions, which discouraged other participants from interacting with them. Once the ethnic group joined the informal sport

together as a group and went in and out as a unit, it was less likely that they would proactively interact with current members in the sport setting. Further, unwritten rules (appropriate seriousness) in the informal sport setting might not affect the isolated ethnic groups because they usually signed up to play as a team.

For this isolated ethnic group, playing sports together was one of the group activities and one way to reinforce their group identities. It was comfortable for them as familiar languages were used and in-group members had empathy for one another. However, this condition fell into Berry's (1997) category of immigrants' isolation and lack of interaction with people in their new host country. In fact, members in the in-group were also aware of the negative effects of their group's being so exclusive and the lack of interaction with other participants. However, they preferred to relax and make everything simple when playing volleyball since they dealt with stress from work and the new environment in their daily lives. Thus, they chose to stay within their ethnic groups the majority of their time in the informal sport setting.

While the decision of this group of immigrants seems to be quite reasonable, they broke the ground rules of informal sport—that people should sign up for the next game based on order instead of blocking the whole team for their group. Since there was no authority in informal sport except for the unwritten rules formed by members' consensus, no one policed the process of signing up for a team. Thus, strategies such as encouraging players to bring friends to play sports together (William, Whipp, Jackson, & Dimmock, 2013) may need further consideration in informal sport since it may create clique effects and people may become less proactive regarding seeking relationships with out-group members. Danzer and Yaman's (2013) research also indicated that the presence of ethnic friends increases minorities' interaction cost with majorities and thus reduces the likelihood of integration.



## **Negative Contact Effects and Coping**

Negative contact and interaction have received less research attention and have been less reported on in relevant research (Pettigrew et al., 2011). When participants felt threatened in competition and in conflicts and did not enter the interaction voluntarily, it was more likely that negative contact happened (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). In the current study, participants found ways to avoid negative contact. Generally, participants ended their participation if the social atmosphere and interaction failed to bring the desired benefits. Since having fun was the main goal of their participation, if they could not obtain fun or the negative parts of the interaction exceeded the fun of the sport, they would end their participation.

A majority of the negative interactions was related to a violation of the unwritten rules: if participants failed to meet the group expectations, they had a negative interaction with other players. For example, in the lunchtime basketball group, the credibility of foul calling triggered arguments on the courts. Then, some players might hold grudges toward players with low credibility, and the likelihood of exchanging arguments increased. Gradually, players who had negative contacts left the informal basketball setting because the game and interaction no longer provided the benefits they had looked for in the beginning.

In the volleyball setting, participants who had negative interactions found in-group support from fellow immigrants and were able to cope with the negative experiences. Generally, the in-group members provided emotional support that cheered them up or they would play on the same team to reduce those negative experiences from out-group members. Since they coped with the experience and stayed, researchers had the opportunities to observe these negative experiences.

## **Interactions with Other Immigrants in Sport Settings**

In addition to interacting with ethnic group members, immigrants had more interactions with other immigrants with different ethnic backgrounds in the informal sport setting. The results of the current study revealed that people from non-English speaking groups had more interaction because they had empathy and the language pressure was less because both parties spoke little English. These results were consistent with those from previous research (Elling et al., 2001; Pühse et al., 2011).

In theory, intergroup interaction happened in the optimal conditions, and language was not a part of the conditions. Thus, language may not be the fundamental problem that immigrants face. Further studies regarding immigrants' concerns about language barriers in intergroup contact are needed—studies regarding whether the ethnic majority expects the interaction in quality English or immigrants assume that quality English is necessary for interaction with native speakers. It is necessary to study the language barriers that immigrants identified and to explore how it affects their interaction in sport settings, even though it is believed that sport is a universal language.

## **IMMIGRANTS' SOCIALIZATION AND INTEGRATION**

Sport participants socialize and integrate in the informal sport groups they choose to join. According to the results of the current study, to further socialize and integrate into the society, extending relationships from sport acquaintances to personal friends with off-court social activities was critical to immigrants' social integration, which is presented as Pathway 2 in the conceptual model (Figure 4). The second section of this chapter addresses relationship extension, multiple behavioral settings, and constraints to attending off-court activities. Finally, impacts on immigrants' lives in society are discussed.

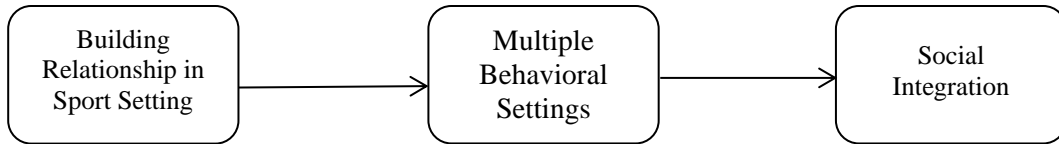


Figure 4: Pathway 2 in the Conceptual Model

### **Acquaintance Relationship Extension**

In the current study, informal sport participants described their sport acquaintances as volleyball or basketball friends with whom they played sports but had little off-court connection. Social activities organized to take place after sport gatherings or playing sports together in other groups were the catalyst to extend the acquaintance relationships. Participants felt that extended relationships off the court created close and long-lasting friendships because they had the opportunity to get to know one another better. Thus, meeting acquaintances in another setting was the basis to further developing these friendships.

In sport settings, participants' behaviors were related to sport activities, and the majority of their conversations were related to the on-court performance or recent sports news. As lunchtime basketball players said, they rarely talked about their personal lives with basketball acquaintances. They would exchange opinions about recent controversies in professional basketball and have keen discussions. Once in a while, they would talk about their job functions; however, they talked little about other aspects of life. In this setting, basketball participants knew only the basketball facet of the other group members' lives. When participants only related to one another through sports, the skill level and respectable foul calling became essential to their relationships and interactions.

It was similar in the informal volleyball setting: participants warmed up, played games, and discussed volleyball techniques at the court. If players belonged to certain small groups based on their ethnicities, they would stay within these groups and interact little with other volleyball acquaintances. Thus, the informal sport setting itself was

somewhat limited in advancing social connectivity. Having interactions in other settings, however, can help participants learn about different facets of their sport acquaintances' lives and build closer relationships.

### **Multiple Behavioral Settings**

According to Barker and Gump (1964), people behave according to the environment and the social expectations in it. Building and extending relationships is more than a two-way process between two individuals. It is also a group process influenced by the larger social groups and the culture in that context (Williams, 2010). In the concept of behavioral settings, Barker (1968) stated that human behavior happens in a physical and social context that shapes the communication, relationships, obligations, and interactions that take place. Thus, when participants expanded their relationships with sport acquaintances off the court and interacted with them in other physical and social contexts, their interactions and communications could be very different from those in the sport context. Learning about different facets of sport acquaintances' lives in off-court activities also facilitated interactions among sport participants in sport contexts. Consequently, multiple behavioral settings acted as a mediator for immigrants' social integration through off-court activities with sport acquaintances.

With contact and interaction in multiple behavioral settings, participants can interact with acquaintances according to the new environment. Further relationships can be developed through a variety of roles and behaviors. Thus, meeting people in multiple behavioral settings helps immigrants' social integration through participating in a variety of activities (Valtonen, 2004) and diversifying their social relationships.

### **Facilitators and Inhibitors of Off-Court Social Interactions**

The results of the current study showed that participants who were willing to attend off-court social activities had shared interests with other participants and believed in sport personality. Informal sport provided social opportunities for participants to meet

new people with shared interests. Some immigrants strived to find an informal sport setting to meet like-minded participants when they moved to new places. They expected that common interests could lead to social opportunities to build their networks. This result is similar to Kim's (2012) research about Korean female immigrants and Allen and his colleagues' (2010) study about international students. In Kim's (2012) research, Korean females became friends with Hispanics and African Americans through their common interests. In the other study, international students in the U.S. met out-group members and became friends through sport activities (Allen et al., 2010).

Believing in sport personalities supported informal sport participants' confidence in other players, as they said "I believe that people who love to play sports are good people." This statement revealed that participants trusted their fellow players, so they sought out sports settings to meet people and build networks. Thus, some participants were proactive in seeking relationships in their voluntary informal sport participation. These results contradict those of Krouwel and colleagues' (2006) and Spaaij's (2012) studies, as they found that meeting different people was less valued for marginalized immigrants than researchers expected. Marginalized immigrants primarily sought to reinforce their ethnic identities through sport activities, which aggregated their inter-ethnic conflict in recreational sports such as soccer.

Thus, meeting sport acquaintances in off-court social activities provides opportunities for people to demonstrate different facets of their personalities and play a variety of roles. In addition, shared interests and believing in sport personality facilitated the off-court interactions. Then, this socializing experience (making personal friends and participating in all kinds of social activities) in multiple behavioral contexts enables immigrants' integration into the society.

Obligations off the court (e.g., family, work, or other networks) were found to be the main inhibitors for attending social activities or engaging in social interactions with sport acquaintances. Since the informal sport is usually not a family event, participants

preferred going back to their families after the game if they had care responsibilities at home. Some participants, especially those in the lunchtime basketball groups, referred to life-stage reasons for not attending social activities: single people are more likely to seek social activities after informal play compared to people who have significant others, spouses, and children, who they go to after the games. In addition, age can be a reason as people have different priorities in various age groups. Thus, these sport participants interacted with sport acquaintances only at the courts and were likely to have weak connections.

Other inhibitors for interaction off the court are previous negative experiences. If players have negative experiences with out-group members off the court, it is unlikely they will attend future activities with those members. For example, in the current study, Thomas had a difficult time having conversations with members of the ethnic majority in off-court social events. His interaction was inhibited by the language and cultural barriers when chatting about nonsport topics. It can be discouraging for immigrants to be at social events where they can participate little in the conversation (Kim, 2012).

As other immigrants stated, it takes a two-way effort to have intergroup interaction. Two-way efforts are related to empathy. Recent studies have discussed increasing empathy for out-group members to mediate intergroup contact (Bruening et al., 2014). As empathy is important in the primary interaction setting, empathy for out-group members in the extended interaction context is as important or even more important because the extended relationships are much stronger and more meaningful for immigrants' lives in their new country.

The current study found that immigrants not only had close relationships on the court, but they also extended these relationships off the court. Even though they did not share the same cultural background, informal sport became an initiation for their friendships. These results are consistent with research that found that mixed friendships

through sports are rare for ethnic majorities but more common among minorities (Elling et al., 2001; Pühse et al., 2011).

Relationships among immigrants were more likely to be built because of the empathy related to being new to the country. In addition, other immigrants brought new information and cultural awareness that was extremely valuable and interesting to open-minded immigrants. Family as an intergroup interaction unit may also have a strong effect on building relationships because people play more roles in such conditions. If the off-court social events are organized for the whole family, closer relationships are more likely to be built than in activities for individuals because the connection extends to the family level from the personal level (like Andy's example in the current study).

### **Impacts on Immigrants' Interaction**

For contact theory in sport development programs, having contacts in multiple behavioral settings can demonstrate the different facets of out-group members' lives, which is useful for relationship building and reducing bias and stereotypes. Also, it can mitigate the negative impression resulting from a low level of sports skill. Showing multiple roles and behaviors is the fundamental purpose of having off-court activities with sport acquaintances. Francis and his ethnic majority friends met in different locations, playing volleyball, watching volleyball, and talking about their private lives; thus, they built strong relationships and became good friends. In addition, they were close in age, which may have been a critical reason for their connection. Jami, however, became close friends with other immigrants not in her age group. Thus, the age factor needs more study to examine its effects. Jami met two sport acquaintances, played different sports with them, and did other leisure activities. They also actively participated in social activities with friends from informal sport. It is this extension of relationships from their sport participation that influenced immigrants' lives.

Building relationships in informal sport and extending them to the personal friend level impacts immigrants' social relationships, which provide emotional and functional support to their lives in the new country. Immigrants in informal sport actually require two forms of socialization: sport and cultural socialization. When playing sports in the informal setting, immigrants not only learn the sport culture but also the culture of the sport group. However, the off-court interactions and social activities matter more to their integration and are more helpful for immigrants' social networks. In the off-court setting, immigrants have opportunities to socialize with fellow immigrants, the ethnic majority, and the in-group members without considering the unwritten rules in sports. Sports remain a common conversation topic; however, immigrants can explore and socialize with the culture and norms of the new country in off-court settings. Immigrants' contact and interaction experience at the court is still highly valued as the informal sport is the start of their networking.

Conversely, lunchtime basketball participants revealed very little off-court interaction even though the advantages of extending relationships off the court for personal friendships are evident. This may be because of the life stages they were in; family was their priority after work, friendships from a group where the priority was to exercise were unnecessary, or no one intended to organize social activities.

The lunchtime basketball participants considered other members as good guys and basketball friends. A young member of this group, however, found differences in life priorities for himself and his basketball acquaintances, as the majority of the members were family men who preferred lunchtime basketball over after-work basketball. One of the participants said that it took time to build off-court relationships; however, there were players who had been with this group for longer than ten years but who had built few off-court relationships with other players.

Some players found it to be unnecessary to continue the sport interaction and had no intention of developing off-court relationships. They had other priorities in their daily



lives, and playing basketball and exercising were their primary motivations to play with this group. In fact, this condition also reflected some players' mind-set in the volleyball group; they were not interested in social relationships and wanted only the fun and exercise of sports. Consequently, acquaintance relationships were all they desired from this group of informal sport participants.

Immigrants found this condition unique compared to the social networks in their home countries, but they accepted it. Immigrants from East Asia and the Middle East described having frequent after-work social interactions with their colleagues. An immigrant was surprised that his colleagues rarely socialized with one another after work. Thus, these immigrants learned the culture through socialization with the lunchtime basketball group. Further study is needed to understand the occupational factors, cultural factors, age-group factors, and other possibilities about why workplace sport groups have little extension of their members' relationships.

Further, no members of the lunchtime group organized social activities for the members' families or only players. It seems the culture of this lunchtime basketball group is only about playing basketball because they did not seek closer relationships. Perhaps most of the players were nonimmigrants, so that created a culture in which off-court socialization was not a norm.

The lunchtime basketball group was evidence for lack of off-court interactions in multiple behavioral settings. The simplicity of their role and behavior contributed little to the relationship building outside of sports. Thus, the culture of this lunchtime basketball group defined itself as a basketball-focused group at a workplace. Sport can, but does not necessarily, become an impetus for social integration.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The current study explored the immigrants' contact and interactions in informal sport settings, the facilitators and inhibitors of intergroup contact, and the impacts of relationship building on immigrants' social integration. The results revealed that socialization in informal sport settings through adapting to the unwritten rules of the specific sport group helped participants adjust to the norms and culture of the sport group and built sport acquaintance relationships with other participants. Further, off-court social activities in multiple behavioral settings, which were derived from the contact and interaction at the courts, contributed to immigrants' integration because acquaintance relationships were successfully extended to personal friendships.

Two pathways in the conceptual model visualized the findings of the current study, as Pathway 1 demonstrated the socialization process within informal sport settings and Pathway 2 showed that the extended socialization in society was mediated by social activities in multiple behavioral settings. In addition, several moderators facilitate or inhibit the relationship-building process in informal sport settings. These moderators not only influenced the likelihood that intergroup contact would happen but also affected the strength of the contacts' effects on relationship building.

Consequently, informal sport provided a social context where immigrants could build social relationships with other participants who shared the interest of sports. In informal sport settings, immigrants experienced and learned the unwritten rules, which represented the culture of the group, and socialized to this specific group if they chose to stay. In the socializing process within the sport setting, moderators could strengthen or mitigate the contact effects for the relationship development. However, extending acquaintance relationships to personal friendships through off-court social activities in multiple behavioral settings is critical for immigrants' further socialization. In the socializing opportunities in different settings, the participants exhibited various roles they

play in their daily lives, which expanded their understandings of one another and extended the relationships.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Findings of the current study showed that off-court social activities are necessary for informal sport participants to develop relationships from acquaintance to personal friends. Thus, creating off-court activities and socializing opportunities becomes a critical task for sport management practitioners who intend to use sport as a tool for integration. Although informal sport is unstructured and self-ruled by participants, sport managers could use different “invasive” levels of intervention to promote socializing opportunities and participation in off-court social activities. Level of invasiveness refers to the level of direct intervention into an existing system.

The least invasive intervention would be for sport managers to encourage informal sport participants to proactively engage in intergroup contact and off-court activities. Proactivity was found to be a moderator in the sport settings, and some research participants indicated that their socializing strategies were proactively creating social opportunities to interact with other players. However, the proactivity might be able to moderate the off-court interaction as well. Thus, sport managers can encourage newcomers to the sport setting to seek off-court social interactions; in addition, sport managers can recommend that the regular participants invite and include newcomers in their routine off-court social events. In this way, sport managers neither intervene in the self-ruled sports games nor intrude in the organizing of intergroup interactions and off-court social activities. Sport managers simply help informal sport participants to be aware of the social opportunities derived from their informal sport participation and encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities.

Sport managers can play more active roles in facilitating the social opportunities and promoting the off-court social events. Sport managers’ involvement at this level is

more invasive compared to the intervention described in the previous paragraph. In large sport facilities where on-site facility managers supervise the safety and operation of the whole facility, these managers can utilize the bulletin boards in the facility to announce or advertise the routine social activities of the informal sport groups. Specifically, the facility managers can highlight the locations and times of social activities, which is critical information for interested participants who might miss such information and are too shy to ask during play. The facility managers can also help promote special social events if the event organizers request access to the bulletin boards to spread the word. In addition, facility managers can organize social activities for all users in the facility, including organized program participants and informal sport participants, using the open space and equipment in the sport facility. For example, sport managers in recreation centers can host sports viewing parties when major sport events are broadcast on TV for facility users and actively create social opportunities for those users. These could be stand-alone event, or in conjunction with on-court play.

Sport managers can also more directly intervene in the informal sport to promote interaction and social opportunities. One way to facilitate socialization is to intervene in the formation of teams. As the findings of the current study revealed, informal volleyball players would sign up with their friends to be on the same team or avoid unpopular players by signing up for another team. Consequently, it is likely that these participants have little interaction and social opportunity with out-group members. As a result, sport managers can create a monitoring mechanism for team formation to ensure that the teams are formed based on the sign-up order to prevent cliques. Further, sport managers can intervene in the formation of teams by evening out the teams based on skill levels. For, example, sport managers in large facilities can utilize ability courts to distinguish players with different skill levels; thus, players can choose the courts that match their own skill levels and have competitive matches. However, if sport managers use these strategies to

prevent small group cliques and lopsided games, it raises the question of whether the intervention intrudes on the fundamental characteristics of informal sport.

The most invasive way to intervene in informal sport for socialization's sake is cooperating with the identified connectors in the informal sport setting and designing social events for the sport groups. Connectors, who have good social skills with people and act as catalysts for the on-court interaction and off-court social activities, can actively promote those activities and encourage participation within the informal sport groups and make these social activities legitimate and popular. Thus, these connectors facilitate the social interaction among participants in cooperation with sport managers. This intervention is similar to organized sport-for-integration programs where specific integrational benefits are brought to the targeted population through structured approaches and intentional designs. The connectors help bring social and integrational benefits to informal sport participants with the intervention constructed by sport managers. Nevertheless, these high levels of manipulation and intervention from sport managers in informal sport may highly intrude on the autonomy of informal sport, which violates the common ground of informal sport and influences the informal sport experience.

These practical implications also lead to a discussion of future studies, especially with regard to the dichotomous separation between organized sport and informal sport. Bowers and Green (2013) revealed that the separation of organized sport and informal sport may omit the complementary effects between the two, saying, "taxonomically separating the experiences engendered in the organized and unstructured settings creates a false dichotomy that fails to account for the important meanings to emerge from their synthesis" (p. 422). As a result, playing experiences derived from organized sport and informal sport can provide meaningful community associations, while playing experiences in one setting complement the experiences in another (Bowers & Green, 2013).

Informal sport settings were utilized in the current study, while previous sport-for-integration programs have been implemented in organized sport settings. Sport participants had different experiences depending on the sport contexts (Theeboom et al., 2012; Warner et al., 2012). Since both settings have demonstrated the capacity for creating interaction effects that engender a variety of integrational experiences and benefits to sport participants, a joint design composed of purposefully organized activities and the characteristics of informal sport (e.g., openness and flexibility) may provide a wider range of experiences than activities in one of these sport settings. Organized sport programs and informal sport have their merits for sport-for-integration programs; thus, sport managers can utilize both settings to provide more complete experiences for intergroup contacts and the consequent social integration.

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Informal sport settings were selected as the research sites because informal sport contexts are close to the places where immigrants live. Organized sport-for-development programs generally attract tolerant participants with little ethnic bias, and people who are most prejudiced are likely to avoid inter-ethnic interactions and related developmental programs (Pettigrew, 1997). In the current research, participant observation in informal volleyball was used to avoid selectivity bias as all informal volleyball participants were observed in the same setting. However, during the twelve observation sessions over three months, many players had irregular participation and came to the informal play meetings only once in a few weeks. Thus, it was challenging to determine whether the players had ended their participation or just could not play in those weeks.

One method to reduce selectivity bias would be to conduct a longitudinal study that is longer than one course (Pettigrew, 1998). For study in the informal sport setting, since there is no specific length of a course or a program, a longitudinal study may require one full season or two to observe the intergroup contact in the setting. Some

informal sport participants played once a month or skipped the weekly volleyball session if they were injured or had schedule conflicts. In addition, some players would take a few months off to participate in other activities. Thus, to conduct research in informal sport requires a longer period time to observe and collect data to obtain a complete picture of the intergroup contact in that setting.

Another limitation of the current study is the failure to recruit Spanish-speaking immigrants as they were not confident interviewing in English. Chinese-speaking and Spanish-speaking immigrants were the two major immigrant groups in the observed informal volleyball context. The researcher recruited and convinced the Chinese-speaking immigrants by speaking Mandarin and explained questions in Mandarin if needed. However, the researcher could not communicate in Spanish, and several Spanish-speaking immigrants turned down invitations for interviews. Thus, the Spanish-speaking immigrants were only observed but were not interviewed.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

The current study conducted research in only one informal volleyball setting and one informal basketball setting. However, each informal sport setting has its own culture and norms, and the interaction among participants may be different as well. Thus, future research can study multiple informal volleyball or basketball settings to compare interactions and contact effects in those settings to explore what an effective setting for immigrants' integration is or to identify which kind of sport—either team sports or individual sports—can better facilitate integration. In the current body of literature, organized team sports were found to have better contact effects than organized individual sports (Brown et al., 2013).

The current study found that intergroup contact in informal sport and its relationship extension can facilitate the social integration of immigrants. Future research should investigate the differences in integration effects between organized sport programs

and unorganized informal sport. This line of research can provide options to sport managers selecting appropriate settings and approaches corresponding to available resources to promote social integration through sport. Bekhuis and colleagues (2013) found that with overly emphasized multiculturalism in a setting, the positive intergroup contact effect may be reversed. In addition, this investigation should recruit not only immigrants but also ethnic majorities in both organized and unorganized settings to identify whether ethnic majority participants of the organized program truly have a more tolerant attitude that is significantly different from that of the ethnic majority in informal sport.

Based on the discussion of the current study, the culture of the sport setting influences the intergroup contact effects within it. In order to extend the application of the contact theory, the culture of the sport setting needs to be incorporated as the background analysis for intergroup contact practice because the context matters and the context itself may influence the intergroup contact.

Future research could identify “connectors” in informal sport settings and examines the role that connectors play in informal sport. For example, connectors may play critical roles in participant retention because they are likely to welcome and greet newcomers while reviving the interests and social bonds of regulars. Thus, future research should identify connectors in informal sport and determine how they become connectors. It is also important to recognize connectors’ contributions to the social contact and relationships in informal sport.

In addition, social network analysis (Scott, 2013) could be applied to further study the social structure in informal sport settings or even the bigger local sport community such as the informal volleyball community in an entire city. Social network analysis uses nodes and ties to visualize the social structure. With social network analysis, researchers could identify the connectors in informal sport and analyze their social relationships with other players. The use of social network analysis can also recognize the social



relationships between ethnic group members to complement the data gathered via observation and interviews.

Based on the results of the current study, skill level can be an influential facilitator or inhibitor in the sports setting, in which a variety of skill levels is presented. Thus, future research should compare the intergroup contact effects of a homogeneously skilled group and a heterogeneously skilled group. This kind of study could clarify the roles of skill level in intergroup contact and their impacts on skill-matched groups and hierarchical social statuses created by skill levels.

Finally, off-court social activities in multiple behavioral settings were found to be the necessary mediator for social integration in the current study. Thus, future studies should use an experimental or quasi-experimental design to determine the effectiveness of each behavioral setting for participants' social integration and the number and characteristics of behavioral settings needed to engender valid effects.

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol

1. Thank them for taking the time to talk with me. Introduce myself. State that I am a Ph.D. candidate from the sport management program at the University of Texas. I am current collecting data for the dissertation about the social interaction in the sport contexts. (Avoid specifically use the phrase “inter-ethnic interaction” here as it may bias further answers.) Tell them that their responses will be aggregated with those of others, and that the confidentiality of their identity will be kept, nor will I verbally tell anyone what they said specifically. So, they can feel free to respond in any ways that they like. Then, proceed to the voluntary written consent form.
2. Ask a bit about them and their sport experience.
  - A. What sports do they play?
    - a. How long have they played each sport?
    - b. The level of skills for each sport they play
  - B. Where have they played sports in?
    - a. Probe the location and style of play
    - b. Ask them to describe people they play with
    - c. Ask them to describe impressions, interactions, and relationships with people they play sports with
  - C. What do they think about informal sport?
    - a. What benefits are they seeking? Probe
    - b. What roles do other players play in this process?
    - c. What do they think about competition and skill levels in informal sport?
3. Ask them to talk about their open play volleyball/ lunchtime basketball playing experience.
  - A. Why do they choose to play in this recreation center/ play with this lunchtime basketball group?
    - a. What do they like about this open play volleyball/ lunchtime basketball group? Probe
    - b. What do they dislike about this open play volleyball/ lunchtime basketball group? Probe
4. Ask them to talk about other players in the open play volleyball/ lunchtime basketball group.
  - A. Ask them to describe other plays’ skill level
    - a. Probe their feeling about skills level and overall level of play
  - B. Ask them to describe the interactions they have with other players on and off courts

- a. Ask them to name/describe a few players whom they feel closer with or have frequent interactions
  - b. Ask if there are specific reasons that they have more interactions with some people or feel closer to
  - c. Have they formed new friendships? How about strengthen existing friendships?
  - d. Probe if ethnicity plays a role in the process or there are other reasons.
5. Ask about their thoughts about playing sports with diverse population and their experiences
  - A. Ask them to talk the inter-ethnic interaction in the open play volleyball/ lunchtime basketball group
  - B. How do inter-ethnic interaction experience in informal sport impact their daily lives?
6. Well, we have talked a lot about their experience in sports especially in informal sport settings. Is there anything else they can tell me about the inter-ethnic interaction or that you want me to know that might be helpful for my study?
7. Ask about demographic information:
  - A. Age
  - B. Gender
  - C. Native country
  - D. Length of time living in the US
  - E. Is team sport participation usually performed alone or with friends/family?
8. Thank them. Tell them how much you appreciate how helpful they were.

## **Appendix B**

### **The Guideline for Participant Observation**

- a. Appearance: researchers will observe clothing, physical appearance, gender, and age; and note anything that might indicate membership in groups or sub-groups.
- b. Verbal behaviors and interactions: researchers will observe who speaks to whom and for how long, who initiated interaction, language spoken, and tone of voice. Researchers will note that gender, ethnicity, and age of speakers and dynamics of interaction.
- c. Physical behaviors and gestures: what people do, who does what, who interacts with whom, and who is not interacting. Researchers will note how people use their voice and body languages to communicate and how they express their emotions.
- d. Personal space: researcher will observe how close people stand to one another and note that the preference of space might suggest the relationship among them.
- e. Human traffic at the site: researchers will observe who enters, leaves, and spend time in the observation site; researchers will also note that how long they stay, who they are (gender, age, and ethnicity), are they alone or accompanied, and number of people.
- f. People who stand out: researcher will identify who receive more attention than others and note the characteristics of those individuals and what differentiates them from others.

## Appendix C

### Summary of Codes and Example Quotations of the Volleyball Group

Corresponding concepts in theory	Code name	Definition	Example quotation
Equal Status	Skills	Status and treatment Players received in informal sport based on their skill levels	It is really easy to communicate and build relationships with other players if you play volleyball well in informal settings. Once they know that I can play, they'll ask me. But then, you see there are some people that they're not going to include and I'm like, "That's not cool."
Cooperation	Healthy Team Competition	Players pursue competitive informal volleyball games	Most of the players want to win, then sports have some competitiveness in it so when you play, you don't want to have a lousy game. The average playing level at the South is probably the highest among the open volleyball I have been to in town. So I play there regularly. It is more competitive and people can hit the ball back and forth.
Common Goals	Exercise	Players want to exercise with playing volleyball	Exercising is my priority. I don't have time to exercise during week days. In addition, volleyball is a team sport so we need to have sufficient people to be able to play the game.
	Fun	Players want to have fun playing volleyball	It's open gym and it's just volleyball. You just have fun, you know. It's tough when you're competitive, you have to balance if it's open gym though, you really have to tap down. Most people they are just looking for some fun in 2-3 hours.
Supportive Norms	Informal Sport Characteristics	The distinctive norms of informal volleyball	We usually played against new people every time. It is difficult for different levels of players to compete together, especially for team sports. The barrier to enter is lower so you can come in whenever, I think you

Personal Interaction	Social Opportunities	Players want to meet new people and make friends in informal volleyball.	are more likely to make friendships and stuff in informal than leagues because it's not as competitive. The informal, they do play more of a friendly and open-minded social role When I arrived the US, making friends is one of my motivations to play sports. I wanted to meet new people and create more opportunities to speak English. I prefer that (informal) because I get to meet new people and you get to play with different people you never played with before.
	Interaction at the Court	Intergroup interaction among players at the informal sport facility	If people have a good game, it is more likely to chat on the court, keep chatting on the way to the court side, and still chatting on the bench. It is a start for building relationships. Some are really nice that if I missed something, they would come over and cheer me up. Some people care less about others and have no intention to talk.
Friendship Opportunity	Interaction off the Court	Intergroup interaction among players off the informal sport facility during their free time	I was invited to a barbecue and all that by people who lives here. It was fun and it's all local people. So yeah, I think it helps and I also like to promote my country. We would have parties, birthday or whatever. One friend, we actually went to Super Bowl together.
Functional Relations	Adjustment	Changes players make to achieve desired fit with the informal volleyball group	I think every court has its own culture. Players have to learn about it and adjust to it if they want to play there. I try to improve myself to be advanced. So I can play with the better ones. I try to stay in touch with the better ones, not just at the court, but outside the court. I hope to become friends with them, know where they are going next so I can join them.
Behavioral Factors	Proactive Interactions	Players actively initiate interactions with others	I feel that if I interact with other people actively, they are more likely to say hi or talk to me. Some people prefer not to interact with others. If those people don't play volleyball well, it is unlikely that other

Affect Factors	Anxiety	Stress comes from intergroup interaction with informal volleyball players	players will talk to you and they probably don't know what to say to you at all. They invited me to hang out with them, but I felt the pressure to come up with something to say. It was not as relaxed as I hope. The only topic I could discuss is probably sports. If they were talking about life experiences, it's difficult to join the conversation since all my life experiences are from Taiwan. It was pretty bad then.
	Empathy	The ability to understand outgroup members' feelings	There are some players from Mexico in this gym. One of them is an excellent volleyball player, but he speaks little English. I think maybe we are both minorities in the US and we share the same feelings of being new to this country. So we have more interaction.
Knowledge	Learning New Cultures	American and foreign cultures learned from the intergroup interaction.	I think I get to know a little bit about it through sports. When I talk to Americans, I would know their lifestyle, what they care about. I think in general, Americans pay attention to politics, health care reform, finance and economic issues, which are relevant to their daily life. We would talk about this during the break, sometimes.
			I think it's beneficial for people like me who's immigrant to know more about the cultural, the society, not just the culture here from the locals also from people from other country that happen to do the sports with me.
Social Categorization	In-group Identity (volleyball group)	Volleyball group as a social group to which players identify as a member of it	I wish it was a little friendlier for people, you know like it was a little less clique-y and a little bit more inviting and warm. Especially here, we have a lot of new people coming in and moving in all the time and there's nothing that could ever been new to something but especially in a new city. That one percent or two people that you feel like you belong or that you're welcome, it makes all the difference in the world.
	In-group identity (ethnic group)	Ethnic group as a social group to which players	They develop their own in-groups and so the thing that they had against them is what they become and they don't ever check themselves and I always find that another paradox, like, we need...and

Relationships Extension		identify as a member of it	<p>it happen a lot with groups that are on the outs.</p> <p>I get to know some Taiwanese and become good friends with them. We go eat together quite often and do a lot of things together. I got to expand my social life through them and know their friends. But we speak in Mandarin majority of the time.</p>
	Sport Personality	Trust in sport participants' characters.	I just think that basically, I believe that people who want to do sports or wanted exercising regularly, they're nice people, they're healthier and they're more open-minded
	Common Interest	Volleyball is the shared interests among volleyball players	When you come here, you don't know anybody. Because I love playing sports, I figured that there are some people who would have the same interests as me and so that's what I found. When you start going to the open volleyball courts and the meet up, I'm like, "That's how I met everybody." Different cultures, different ethnicity, but doesn't really matter what they are because we just want to play volleyball and have fun.
	Life Stage	Life obligations affect informal sport participation and related activities	I don't go to those social hang out because I have already been out for several hours. I have to go home and take care of kids. I usually leave home after 12 at noon and go home around five o'clock. It has been more than five hours. We have to prepare for school things and work stuff, get ready for Monday. If I am single or my wife and kids are not in town, I will probably hang out with them afterwards.
	Impact on Life	The impact of the intergroup interaction on immigrants' lives	<p>I got to expand my social life through them and know their friends. I think networking or get to know more people is very helpful for people living overseas. If you are in need of help or job hunting information, friends are very important.</p> <p>I was invited to a barbecue and all other events by people who live here. It was fun and it's all local people. So I think it (interaction) helps (immigrant's life) and I also like to promote my country.</p>



### Summary of Codes and Example Quotations of the Basketball Group

Corresponding concepts in theory	Code Name	Definition	Example quotation
Equal Status	Skills	Status and treatment players received in informal sport based on their skill levels	I think the higher your skill level the more respect you get. They kind of get that respect because number one, they're some of the better players; number two, they give the respect when others are making some calls and stuff.
Cooperation	Healthy Team Competition	Players pursue competitive informal basketball games	I'd much rather that it'd be two very good matched teams to where it's a really competitive game because you don't want it to be so lopsided that it makes it boring.
Common Goals	Exercise	Players want to exercise with playing basketball	Number one: stay in shape, especially as I get older, I realized that I don't like just to go to the gym and run on the treadmill, I like to have my workout and my fitness have more purpose so I like to stay in shape and play a sport to stay in shape. I'm looking for is exercise that doesn't feel like exercise. You know, I'm having some fun and I'm burning some calories.
	Fun	Players want to have fun playing basketball	The reason I play basketball is I enjoy, I hate running, jogging, it's boring. That's why I keep playing basketball. It's for joy and keeping in shape.
Supportive Norms	Informal Sport Characteristics	The distinctive norms of informal basketball	I would like to control players who could come out, but you know we can't. We just have to deal with it. What I like it seems to be pretty consistent. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday there's seems to be a game unless it's raining. Here it is a work environment so you cannot argue you know. It is kind of bullying type, okay, I have to listen to you, done. But outside, it doesn't happen like that. So here it is not formal, it is not informal, it is something in between. You can't argue because

Personal Interaction	Social Opportunities	Players want to meet new people and make friends in informal volleyball.	<p>you will lose your job. You can argue a little bit.</p> <p>We get to know each other when we sit there between games and talk a little bit.</p> <p>Secondary thing is meeting people from different facets of the company. That's something I don't know where everybody was but I try to ask everybody where do you work because in my job as a solution architect.</p>
	Interaction at the Court	Intergroup interaction among players at the informal sport facility	<p>You try shout encouragements, instructions, because they may not be on the same team all the time. But during the game, you kind of shout instruction or encouragement as much as possible. You try to win if that doesn't work. The thing is you have learned that you got to leave whatever happened on the court.</p> <p>Most of the times its basketball related, but sometimes we talk about work or something unrelated.</p>
Friendship Opportunity	Interaction off the Court	The acquaintance relationships among players only stay at the court	<p>I think most of them don't associate outside of the work. Because everyone has so many thing to do. Most guys have family like I said; it is a way to release the stress. After work, once you go home, there is another part of life to deal with. I think a lot of guys like it because it happens during lunch, they can sacrifice not go out to eat and try to get some basketball.</p> <p>That's the weird thing that co-workers here once they leave, nobody has interaction with them. In my country, people come and go, like my wife's co-worker, they still hang out together.</p>
Functional Relations	Adjustment	Changes players make to achieve desired fit with the informal volleyball group	<p>It doesn't matter to me. If they are intense, you know I could play like that. If they play relaxed, I could play relaxed as well and its...so...it's fine with me.</p> <p>Compared to my experience there, for me as a player, I just need to adapt to people. He probably doesn't adapt that well to different styles, so that's why he's having problems.</p>

Behavioral Factors	Foul call	Argument about foul calls	<p>There are conflicts. Certain players who have been out there have some disagreements, come to face to face argue back and forth more than once.</p> <p>In term of the foul call, that's always the biggest issue. It is a very subjective thing even with the referee in a real game, it is inconsistent among them. Now you take it down to a level where there is no referee, we have players calling fouls. There is always disagreement.</p>
Affect Factors	Respect	An admiration for other players in the basketball group	<p>It's all about being able to respect each other and playing a fair game.</p> <p>I think in pick up sports, its more about your track record. If people label you as someone who makes lame calls all the time, people would tend to argue more.</p>
Knowledge	Learning New Cultures	American and foreign cultures learned in the intergroup interaction.	<p>I really have always been just interested in different cultures in general, food, customs things like that. It is a good thing for your work too.</p> <p>I would say there's more trash talking here. I think it's in the U.S. street ball culture, you know, more trash talking.</p>
Social Categorization	In-Group identity (ethnic group)	Ethnic group as a social group to which players identify as a member of it	<p>I think it does make a difference. For all these years I have played, I have felt the tension. I have felt it before. I think one perception is that US has been known for good basketball so they think someone from Iran can't play.</p> <p>I got along well with them because we have similar playing styles in comparison to people from other countries. Playing style includes where I expect to catch the ball, where I expect my teammates to be, how often we pass the ball, how we use ball screens and all other tiny details.</p>

Relationship Extension	Life Stage	Life obligations affects informal sport participation and related activities	<p>Most of the people that I play with isn't in my age group, and have family already. So we just hang out during lunch break for basketball as most of them have to get back home after work.</p> <p>After work. I'm just away, me and my family schedule is, we don't have a lot of time to invest in that</p>
	Impact on Life	The impact of the intergroup interaction on immigrants' lives	<p>I think it helps because here I get to see different behaviors of people, right? So when I'm outside, you know, off this group, I could easily adapt to how other people are behaving. Even the small talk, since I hear a lot of how people talk here, I would understand what other people are saying off the court as well. So the diversity helps, and me trying to understand other people as well, outside.</p>

## **Appendix D**

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number: 2014-03-0100

Approval Date: 05/13/2014

Expires: 05/12/2015

Name of Funding Agency (if applicable): n/a

### **Consent for Participation in Research**

**Title:** Sport for Integration: Inter-Ethnic Interaction of Immigrants in Informal Sport

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

You have been asked to participate in a study about social interaction among players in informal sport. The purpose of this study is to understand players' interaction with each other on and off the courts, and how they build social relations with other players in this sport context. In addition, the study pays special attention to the social experience of immigrants in informal sport and aim to understand how this social relations and experience affect their integration to the new hosting country.

#### **What will you be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to conduct an interview with the researcher for forty minutes. This study will include approximately twenty-five study participants. Your participation will be audio recorded.

#### **What are the risks involved in this study?**

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

#### **What are the possible benefits of this study?**

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, this study is expected to benefits the social integration process of immigrants.

#### **Do you have to participate?**

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in any way. If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of the consent form and return it to the researcher. You will receive a copy of this form.

**Will there be any compensation?**

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

**How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?**

This study is confidential. Your real name and contact information will be used only for scheduling an interview, which will be deleted from all materials at the end of the interviews. Pseudonyms will be used in all interview transcriptions. Therefore, no real names or other identifying information will appear in the transcripts. Audio-files will be deleted once the interviews have been transcribed. All files will be kept in the researcher's personal password-protected laptop and will only be accessible to the researcher. Interview transcriptions will be deleted one year after the dissertation is completed.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for three months and then erased.

**Whom to contact with questions about the study?**

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher **Yen-Chun Lin** at (970) **515-8502** or send an email to **yc\_lin@utexas.edu** for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is **2014-03-0100**.

**Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?**

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at **orisc@uts.cc.utexas.edu**.

**Participation**

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By verbally consenting to participate in this study, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

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